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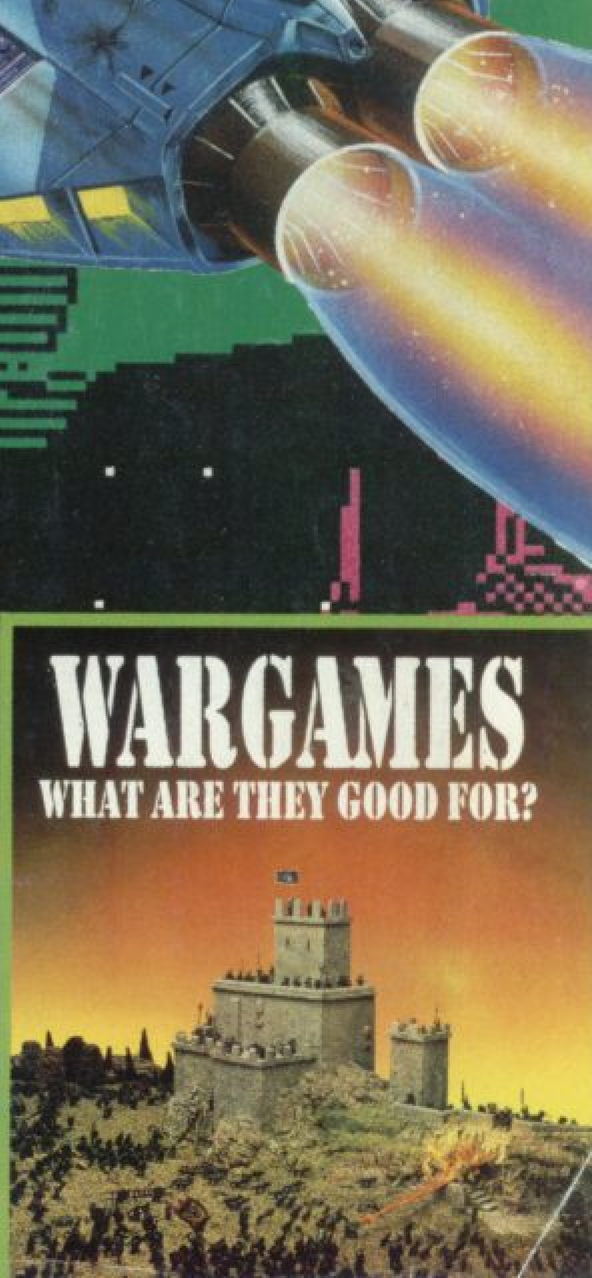
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SOFTWARE



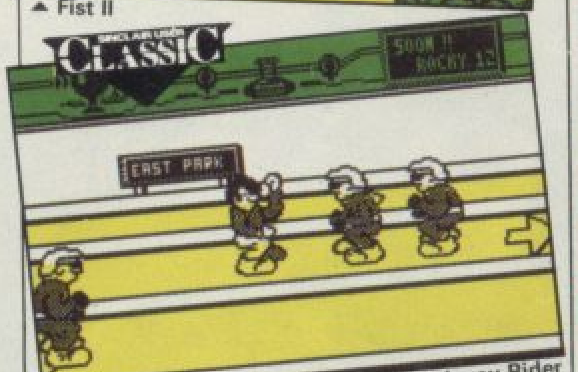
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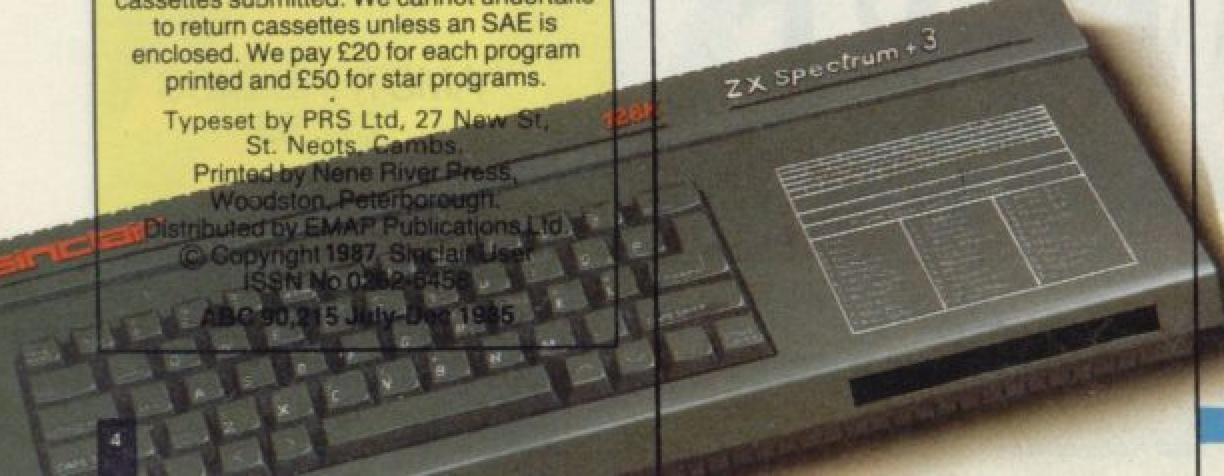
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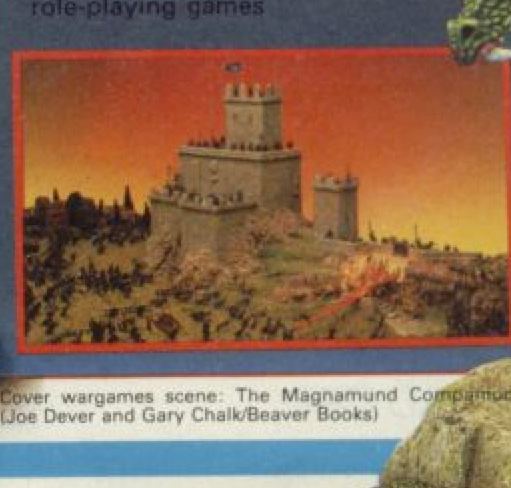
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NEWS SCOOP!



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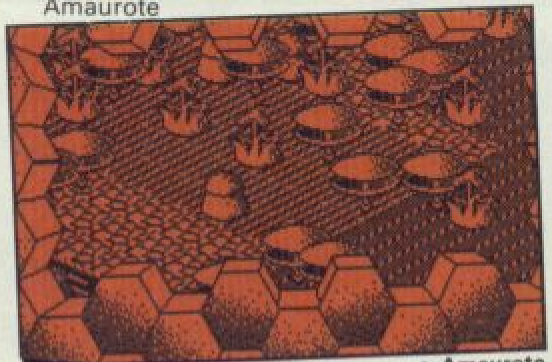




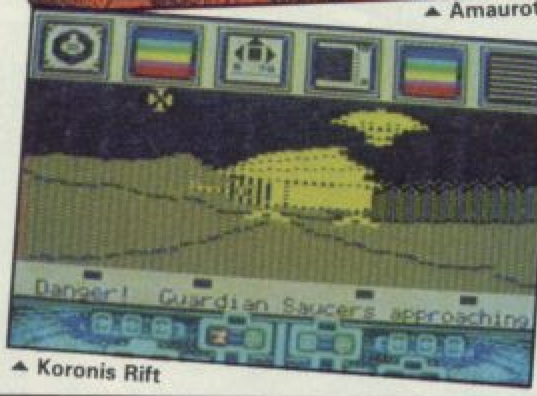
Cover wargames scene: The Magnamund Companion (Joe Dever and Gary Chalk/Beaver Books)

E · N · T · S

PREVIEWS



▲ Amaurote



▲ Koronis Rift

COVER SMASH



FEATURES

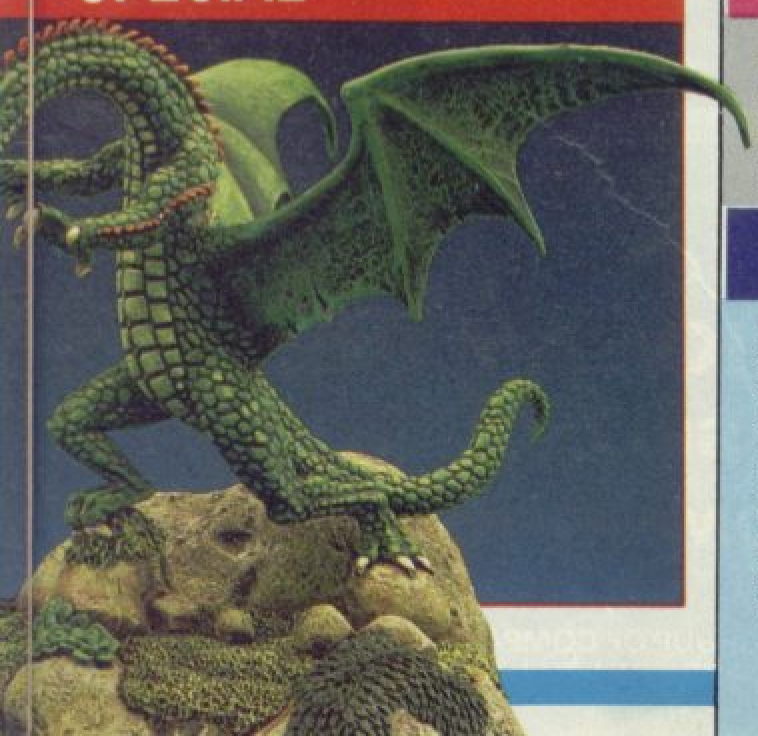
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Bobby Bearing The Edge

You gave this five stars – I wouldn't give it two. On first loading, the game seems to have great promise. The loading screen is one of the most original I have ever seen. Even the control selection has its charm.

However the game itself is its least appealing part. Once you have worked out how to control dear old Babby the game becomes one monotonous screen after another. True, the graphics are very good, but there seems no point ot the game after you have spend 20 minutes searching for your elusive cousins. Some of the screens pose interesting problems but most are so repetitive as make this game one where you play it once and leave it on the shelf to collect dust.

Very difficult to say any more but just one final note – today all games should be able to work with most peripherals especially those that have been around for some time.

However, watch out , this one refuses to work point blank with the Ram Turbo interface attached■

David Powell
London

War Martech

War is a space shoot-em up, and wait, don't just say "Oh no, not another one of them." It's not. This is one cool game.

After loading, you get a menu which is scrolled up or down according to hwat you want to do. You can get from the menu, **Start**, that's obvious; **Ship Status**, this hsows your ship in a window at th etop right-hand side of the screen with the number if lives you have left, **Score**, shows your score in the window. The other things oin the menu are all things you can buy with hard earned points, they are **Extra Ships** and a variety of weapons.



Play takes place in a fairly small part of the screen. It is only just big enough but because there is a very good picture taking up the rest of the space, it is all right. You look down on the game so you can see the top of your ship, enemies etc.

The enemies ofd the first level include spinning barrels these should be blasted; revolving rectangles cannot be harmed by you, so get out of their way, and ships similar to your own attack in formation, but luckily they don't fire. There are ground obstacles, but not many.

War is fast and furious, has great graphics and backdrops and is addictive■

Richard Harrison
Hertford, Hertfordshire



Nightmare Rally Ocean

I thought Nightmare Rally **was better than your 4-star rating. It's weird and wonderful controlling your super rally car and trying to reach the target score for each stage without destroying the car. EAch stage is filled with obstacles some useful – which you pick up – and some dangerous and picking up Psi symbols adds gadgets to your car like turbos and hyperspace gizmos.**

If you're a driving game buff buy it. It's excellent. The only thing wrong with it is the sound■

Mark Dawes



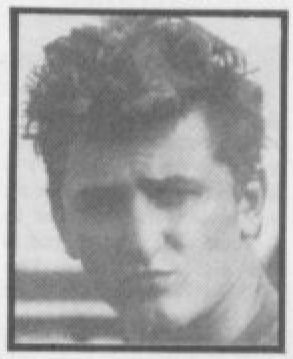
Zoids Martech

On first appearance this is a game for the youngster, but it is really a very good strategy/combat game. The graphics are adequate, but the game itself needs a lot of thought. It's icon-driven with the combat screen central, messages appear in small boxes in the corners of the central screen. Progression through the different Zoids is difficult although the game Save **routine is very useful. Well worth buying■**

C L. Kearns
London

Scalextrics Virgin Games (Leisure Genius)

I have to write to say how megafab Scalextrics **is. Its even better than sliced bread. With a choice of over fifteen pre-programmed tracks and an option to design your own course. The part I like is being able to race your friends and totally burn them**



off. I cannot find one fault with the game. In other words its just truly, truly, intergalactically, megafab. If you haven't got it get it and get it now. Well done Leisure Genius.

Stefan Nokes
Dunston
Game choice:
Aliens

Super Soccer Imagine

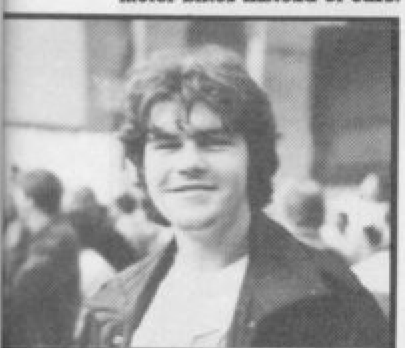
This game is a cracker. 1-8 players can play this game and you can play it in a knock out competition. When I first played the game I had to get used to the speed, energy and the force of the shot. You also have to get used to the degrees 180 and 360 etc. The first time I played I was beaten 13-1 but having got more used to it I can win now. You set up you're own free kicks and corners but I haven't scored from a diving header.

Darren Hoare
Leighton Buzzard
Game Choice:
Ikari Warriors



Super Cycle US Gold

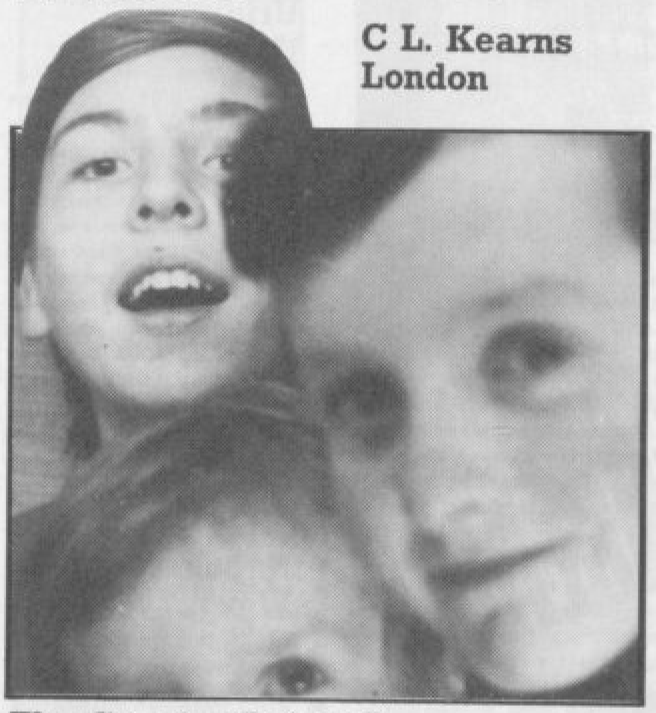
Super Cycle **from US Gold is similar in presentation to Atari** Pole Position **only it has motor bikes instead of cars.**



Another difference is **Pole Position** is a good game whereas **Super Cycle** would be bade even if it were a budget title.

The collision detection has to be the worst that I have ever seen. You can drive through the other riders without crashing. The only time that you can crash is by hitting the road signs and even then you have to do this on purpose. You would be better off buying **Speed King 2** by Mastertronic and use the change towards another game■

Noel Wallace
London



The Goonies Datasoft

I waited ages for this to be converted to the C64 (boo, hiss) and it's terrible.

The idea is to find one-eyed Willy's pirate ship, find the treasure and save your family's home from foreclosures.

You control two characters, which change on each screen, separately. The idea of having two players being above to control a character of the game is the tune. Yes, amid Spectrum's bleeps there is a toe-tapping tune lurking which grabs you instantly.

With only eight screens and one rate, this game is definitely not worth £7.95.

Now let me say something about the game packaging. The hint sheet is the worst presentation I have ever seen. It looks like a very badly photocopied piece of paper with drawings of the characters drawn on.

No way the Christms No 1. Buy another game■

Simon Norton
Cheadle, Cheshire
Game Choice:
Colour of Magic



Zub
Mastertronic

I agree entirely with your review of Zub the game is excellent. It has one of the best soundtracks ever produced by a spectrum (on 128K). Making Zub leap from platform to platform is great fun and is also highly addictive. The graphics are simple, but neatly done all the same; and everything is animated very nicely.

Even the way your energy level is displayed is original. A picture of Zub gradually decreases when an alien gets to him to reveal his skeleton and the in end he collapses in a pile of bones. At £2.99 the game's a giveaway. If you don't know what to buy with your next three pounds get this, you won't regret it.

Scott Hall
Dalkeith
Game Choice:
Ikari Warriors

Molecule Man
Mastertronic

Great!!! Knight Lore-type graphics at £1.99!!! What a shame about the game. The screen is cluttered, hiding objects and it is only a maze in 3D really. Sound is horrendous – no tunes but just bleeps, and the way the cute Molecule Man **moves is so slow!**

You seem to be the only moving thing in the maze as there are no nasties. Perhaps this is a good thing because when there is animation in the scenery, the game gets even slower! This makes it even easier not to walk into walls, reducing your energy.

The only hard thing is finding money to prolong the game but you soon stop wanting to do that!

The maze designer is okay, but it takes ages to do anything with it . You'll soon find the whole thing boring and montonous■

Dales Pearce
Leeds
Game Choice:
Jewels of Darkness







Glider Rider Quicksilva

Graham Taylor was right about Glider Rider; **every 128 owner should have it. The sound is amazing, the graphics are very good, and the game is not so difficult that I ever want to give up. I have completed the game many times, and I still often go back to it, to try and preserve more energy.**

I didn't like Jon Riglar's solution, though. The reactors were numbered in a completely illogical way, and number 4 *can* be destroyed with no loss of energy, simply by leaving it 'till last. This enables you to complete the game with well over 90 energies.

Justin Giogetti
Huddersfield
Game Choice
Trivial Pursuit



Uridium
Hewson

To me Uridium **is one of the most exciting games out of the Hewson stables. This game is one of the most smoothest scrolling shoot-em-ups and is an excellent conversion of the commodore machine. I really think that this conversion is better than the original as it is better in every way except for the sound.**

A worthy conversion from Andy Braybrook.

Anon
London

Napolean at War
CCS



At last a wargame with artillery. The game handles well, the cursor is not dificult as some reviewers have said. It could be a hard game for beginners but for the hardened player it is a good realistic struggle.

All in all well worth taking a look at.

Stephen Dyer
Redditch
Game Choice:
The Archers

Trivial Pursuit Domark ▼

A game like Trivial Pursuit **which can get my decidedly computer-hating family sitting amicably around the Spectrum, deserves a gold medal.**

It's an improvement on the board game; you just relax in a chair and let the joystick do the work. The computer works out all the possible moves and the table which shows up a players weak subject is invaluable in the final stages of the game.

The graphics are entertaining and I like the way the sound of the TP character can be eradicated if it gets annoying. Overall, a well thought out program which should appeal to all age groups.

Judy Falkner
Crowborough
Game Choice:
Deactivators





Glider Rider
Quicksilver

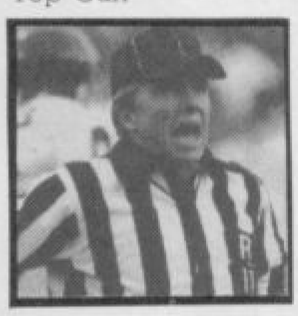
What do you mean when you rated Glider Rider 5 out of 10 in your November issue (??) I think this game is brilliant compared to others you have rated 8 and 9 out of ten (????). The graphics and playability are great too. I don't know if anyone else agrees with me. Also I would like to say the price isn't bad either is it?

Andrew Webster
Doncaster
Game Choice:
Jail Break

Firelord
Hewson

I found Firelord **to be a cross between** Starquake **and** Sabre Wulf. **The effects when Sir Galaheart bites the dust are lovely. The chink of metal has been perfectly recreated. I also found keyboard play and animation to be super smooth. I'm still trying to become better than a peasant. At £8.95 the game is easily well worth it.**

Daniel Jones
Burgess Hill
Game Choice:
Top Gun



write stuff...

Kung Fu Master
Ocean

I think Kung Fu Master is a pretty game. All that needs doing is getting more detail on the men and making the colour much better. The music is brilliant from the beginning to the end which makes it enjoyable. When I first bought the game the loading picture was good and the game started surprisingly well. The colour and detail I must say were poor, but everything else were good. If I was you I would



say Kung Fu isn't totally rubbish. With a little more thought this game would be turned into the Commodore-style of game.

Srinu Kumpatla
Newcastle
Game Choice:
Footballer of the year

Galvan
Ocean

Why, oh why did I buy this game – its useless. In November's issue you gave it four stars – far too high, one star is more like it. The scrolling is the worst I've ever seen – it judders and jerks all over the place. When Galvan goes underwater the colour clash is awful. Galvan is grey and the background is bright blue – yeuch!

The only nice effect in this game is a) when the alien splatters all over the place and b) when Galvan shoots his 'blue beam' gun. Apart form that, Galvan is a game of budget quality.

Philip Sheppard
Londonderry
Game choice:
Cobra





Breakthru
US Gold

How can Jim Douglas give this four stars? It's dreadful. £8.99 can buy so much quality these days. It's good as a budget price though. Its hard to complete eh? No siree, just keep your finger on Break/Space. The car will jump across water, then air, you name it! When you get to the end, there is no sign of a plane, it just goes back to the title screen. The graphics are OK in some places but the men are smaller than the bullets they fire. The sound is dire and the map is hardly much use. All in all another bad one from US Gold. Steer Clear.

Matthew Hall
Heywood
Game Choice:
Academy

Super Soccer
Imagine

IMAGINE'S Super Soccer has the things which would have made Match Day a true classic. Such features are the



practice mode, tackling, freekicks, penalties, sendings off etc. But unfortunately it also has some bugs, eg the ball goes through the goal posts, the ball can get stuck in the posts etc.

To it's credit though it has good player control, enabling you fast – slow running, dribbling and chipped or driven shots. Goalkeeper control is also available to the player.

The pitch itself is quite large, although during practice it is quite easy to get the ball stuck in the screen borders.

The sound is good at the beginning, with a tuneful rendition of 'Match of the Day'. But in the game sound is just the ref's whistle.

Overall, Match Day still reigns supreme with Super Soccer a very close second.

Patrick Walsh
Slough
Game Choice:
Nosferatu

Firelord
Hewson

This looks a bit like Sebra Wulf but is much more enjoyable and tremendously addictive.

You're a knight rushing around a magical land searching for magic charms. You may pick up various items which replenish energy, fire-power and so on.

The first item to look out for is a Fire spell. This enables you to shoot at the other characters which get in your way and sap your energy. Without it you cannot trade or fire.

Trading is a unique feature of the game and is cleverly done. Basically you swap one of your spells on offer. This is a clever way of obtaining vital items without being too helpful.

In gengeral, the game was very enjoyable and, although slightly lacking in originality, tremendously addictive. And it should take many moons to complete■

Darren James
Anglesey,
North Wales
Game Choice:
Glider Rider

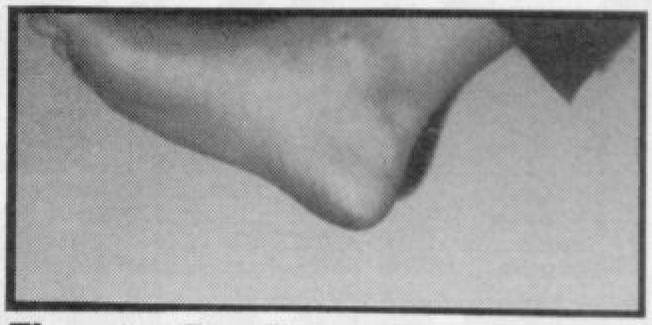


Dragon's Lair
Software Projects

I very much agree with your review of Dragon's Lair by Software Projects. The graphics are very average, not up to todays standards and the gameplay is even worse, harder than the original and the multi loads just make it worse. I think Software Projects made very little effort converting Dragon's Lair and knew the ardent games player would buy on impulse rather than wait for a review of a very average game. I'm sure there's a lot of disappointed owners of Dragon's Lair, and I'm one of them.

Wayne Amos
Aberdare
Game Choice:
Aliens





Thanatos Durell

After reading a rave review of Thanatos in a certain other magazine I went and bought it. It was marvellous. The plot is no revolution but the way it's carried out is incredibly original. Your review 'entirely original' etc buy my satisfaction turned to horro why? Four stars? Your reviewers constantly moan at lack of plot or originality yet when they get it with marvellous graphics et al, they knock it down. Surely it should have got a classic. I heartily recommend it to anyone who likes arcade games and its definitely better than Tarzan, W.A.R., Infiltrator and Camelot Warriors all of which got four or five stars.

PS I never used the words "ace" "fab" or "brill" in my review, my name isn't Baldock and I don't use lots of PS's but I hope you still print this.

Mathew Turner
Stockport
Game choice:
Unit of P.P.W.

Suspense, suspense, eeeyyourr, zap-zap, ho s**t, aaaarrgh!!

This is what I thought of the game Aliens by Electric Dreams. It's just what you said in your review, it's brill, fantastic, I love it! The graphics and the animation for the creatures is coming for you, so all you out there in magazine land go out and get it you'll love it!



David Sully
Crowborough
Game choice:
Nemesis

Every so often — well very often actually — you write to tell us that we know nothing about anything and insist that some program we trashed is actually the best game ever. Conversely you blast us for saying something is great that you absolutely loath and detest.

Enough is enough. We can't take any more, if you think you're so clever you write the damn magazine. We mean it!

Every month we'll devote a page to a selection of your opinons on the latest software. Don't get mad write the review you think the game should have received and we (subject only to space) will print it.

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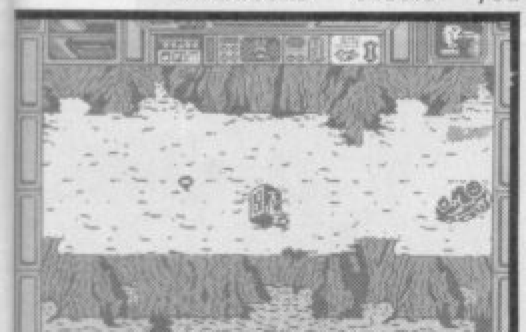
*** Reviews supplied without full name and address will not be considered for publication.**

JON RIGLAR'S ZAP CHAT

Beginning, I received this letter from Paul Tunstall concerning US Gold's recent release;

Breathru.

This is the game that looks awful, plays even worse and probably has found it's way to the corner of the cassette rack marked with 'Danger, US Gold at work.' Paul has proved my point by sending in a way to get through nearly all of the stages. To be honest, this does not sound like a common or garden 'cheat' but more likely to be an incredible bug overlooked by the programmers as they bundled copies of the game into their mini. It seems that when you choose the joystick option for control and as the game starts to play, you must move the car to the centre of the screen and then keep the space bar held down. The vehicle will then start to jump erratically and will avoid all the enemy allowing the player to continue through all the screens and stages without loosing one single life. To return to the normal state of play, you simply release the space bar and continue on your merry way. However, according to Paul, under no account whatsoever should you move the car to the topmost position or the lowest part of the screen. If you do this, your vehicle will crash. Again, remember this at the start of the game to move the car immediately to the start of the screen otherwise you will crash.



Jon Rose from Bognor sent us some tips about

Legend of Kage,

so here they are:

"I thought that this game was good except for the title of course. On Screen 1 it is simply a matter of moving from left to right as fast as you can whilst firing continuously. When you find that you have killed ten of the Ninjas, then stay right where you are and don't move a muscle. Wait until the Dragon King (I though



they had gone bust) appears, then fire at him making sure that you keep well away from his bad breath problem. (Eh? What's this div going on about? Ed) On Screen 2, move from left to right as on Screen 1, but if you notice any Ninjas appearing from the bottom of the screen, wait for them to come up if you are to the left of them, but jump away from them if you are to the right of them.

Try not to jump in the air unless you have to, because the Ninjas are much more difficult to avoid in mid air. Screen 3 takes the prize as one of the most difficult game screens I have ever played. (No wonder as he's only ever played **Manic Miner!**) It is possible to play it 'jumping jack' style moving up a platform and then moving from side to side, but even then it is nigh on impossible. Once I have managed to get past this screen, I'll send more tips, but mainly remember that you must fire continuously."



As Christmas becomes a distant memory, many people could be forgiven for thinking that the computing industry as a whole has hit a quiet spell in terms of major software releases and radical steps forward in programming techniques. On the whole, this is owing simply to the rush up to the festive season of goodwill and of rapid sales as Grandmothers all over Britain get fooled into buying games like Action Biker **for little Freddie's present.**

However, anybody saying the computer industry has met its end is wrong – recently several television programmes have told of how the decline of computers in the home has taken place and insisted the 'modern' teenager prefers to play with a Transformer instead of a computer.

Total tosh, of curse, but what can you expect for TV people who wouldn't know a joystick from a printer.

In this month's column we have more info on Uridium **and how to get further than the second or third section. Also here are some tips on** Trapdoor **and** Zub **from Mastertonic. Not forgetting the all important and uttlerly wonderful 'Zapchat Challenge' Big Eight No. 3 with your fabulous and obviously made up high scores on** Uridium.

Trapdoor

is an absolutely brilliant programme to watch provided you can get home from work or wherever in time to sit down and watch it. The computer version is not too bad either. I've only ever played a pre-production version and I can hardly cast a judgement on a game where you press the key to go left and Berk (for it is he) goes in the opposite direction. (Are you sure about this, Jon? – Entire SU Staff) However, not put off in any way, I am still prepared to

Here we are again folks with the results of yet another groovy and utterly fabulous Zapchat Challenge. This month was the turn of **Uridium** to take a chance in the spotlight and yet again you turned up trumps when sending in the necessary high scores. Well, the chart has been formulated and here are the results.

Zapchat Big Eight: Uridium

	Name	Score	Remark
1	C.Stringer	1,789,000	Very likely story
2	R.Nixon	1,768,234	Classy
3	C.Crooks	1,565,567	Heard of this bod before
4	P.Rose	1,453,234	Made up
5	A.Dean	1,231,980	What's all this 'ere malarky
6	J.BO6	1,112,342	Weird Name
7	H.Howde	1,111,232	Howde partner
8	J.Rose	1,056,890	Good Grief, not him!

Well there you have it and C. Stringer wins the almighty T Shirt which should arrive at his person sometime in the near future (probably next May at the rate we are going here). Moving on to next month's chart and we've got absolutely no idea whatsoever which game to use. Suggestions ranged from the **Great Escape** to **Terra Cognita** but it was eventually decided that we should go for **Gauntlet** from US Gold.

print tips as long as there is a map to go with them. Alex, sent in these tips on a scented piece of pink paper and also a great map which can be found lurking around here.

So, without wasting any more time, we at SU present the opening dialogue to Trapdoor.

Music: "Don't you open that Trapdoor. . ."

Berk: "Hello I'm Berk"

Cue end of programme and start of tips.

Can 'o' Worms: This is very easy. You need 3 worms per can and then send them up. (Eh?)

Boiled Slimies: Push the pot against the wall and then get the slimies. You need four slimies. Drop then into the pot from the above balcony. Now push the pot to the position where you are just in front of the dumb waiter. Let the unicyclist out of the trapdoor and run back to the pot. When the insane unicyclist stops run quickly into the next room and he'll heat the pot instead of your bum (Eh?) Now quickly push it into the dumb waiter and then scarper up the stairs to pull the lever. To kill greenie (Aha!), lure him or it under the weight. Let the weight fall and watch the slimie splat.

Fried Eggs: Get the pan and the bullet from the bucket. Let the bird out. Place the bullet on the trapdoor and when the bird flies by let him have it. Now you have to follow him into the next room and holding your frying pan, try and clamber underneath him. The bird will go up and down and should just miss touching you when it drops. In a moment, the bird will lay an egg and it will drop into your frying pan. Stay in this position and collect a further two eggs, which makes about three. When you have three, place them in the stove until it flashes red. You should then grab them – they will be too hot and you will drop them. When they have cooled down enough to handle, you should place them back into the stove for a further five seconds or so. When you have done this all that remains to do is to send them up. (This is getting slightly confusing because Alex hasn't had the idea to mention where you send them up to – I take it, it's the dumb waiter).

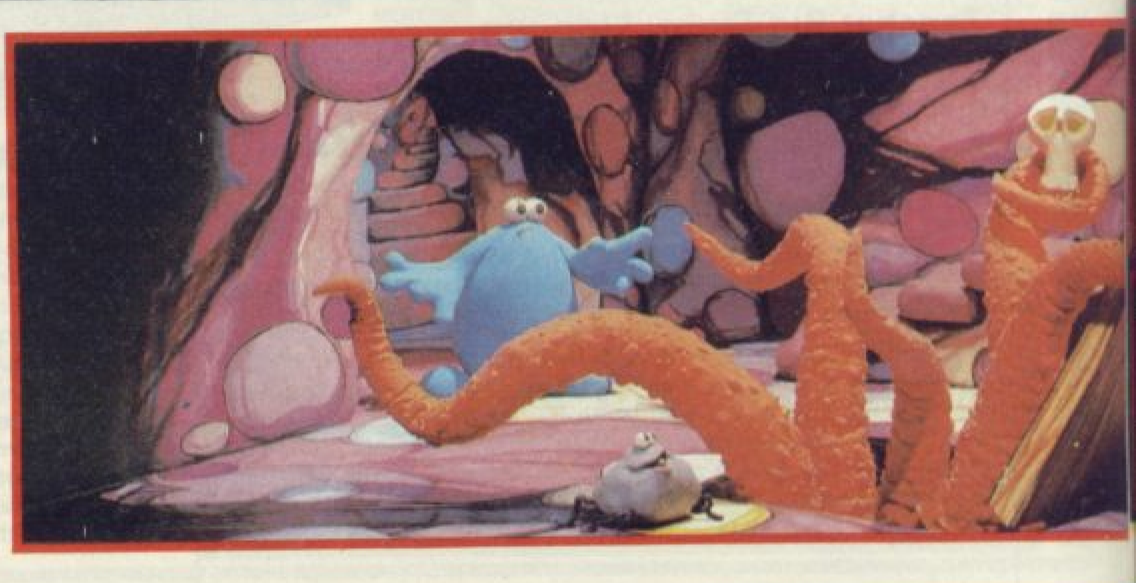
Eyeball Crush: Grab the plantpot and tip it over. You will find that a paket, spelt with a 'c', will drop out. This is a packet of seeds. Take the seeds to the flower pot room

KEY TO MAP

1. BUCKET - V.USEFUL - CONTAINS BULLET. TIP IT.
2. PLANT-POT — CONTAINS SEEDS
3. BOTTLE - FOR EYEBALL CRUSH
4. CAN - FOR WORMS
5. FRYING PAN (BEHIND VAT) FOR EGGS
6. VAT — FOR EYEBALLS
7. POT - SLIMIES ARE BOILED IN IT
8. A WORM
9. BONES — V.GOOD FOR INFO. TRY IT AND SEE!
10. BERK (YOU)
11. 'HI! I'M BERK' T.SHIRTS - AVAILABLE IN ALL SIZES
12. LEVER FOR TRAPDOOR
13. BIRD - FOR EGGS
14. DRUTT - FOR ZULCH
15. STOVE - FOR EGGS
16. NASTY 'ORRID GREEN THING WHO RIDES A UNICYCLE AND GOES AROUND BURNING YOU. FOR POT AND SLIMIES.
17. LEVER FOR DUMBWAITER
18. DUMB WAITER
19. MICK JAGGE... SORRY, CRUSHER - FOR EYEBALL CRUSH
20. WEIGHT - TO KILL GREEN UNICYCLIST
21. LEVER - FOR WEIGHT
22. PLANT POT - FOR EYES
23. NASTY 'ORRID SLIMEY THINGS THAT STICK ON YOUR SKIN — BOIL 'EM!







MAP CHAT



and stand behind the flower-pot. Drop the seeds into the pot and you will find that two will miss and one will be planted. The plant that will then grow has eyeballs and you must grab these and place them into the vat. Then take the bottle and place it under the tap and let the crusher loose. Position the vat so that the vat and bottle get crushed at the same time. You will now have in your possession a bottle of crush which needs to be sent up.

Alex has also a map of Trapdoor that shows the variety of monsters that are encountered in the castle and where they are likely to be found. So, off we go again with the map and of course the theme tune.

Music: "Don't you open that Trapdoor. . . ."

Berk: "Hello I'm Berk"

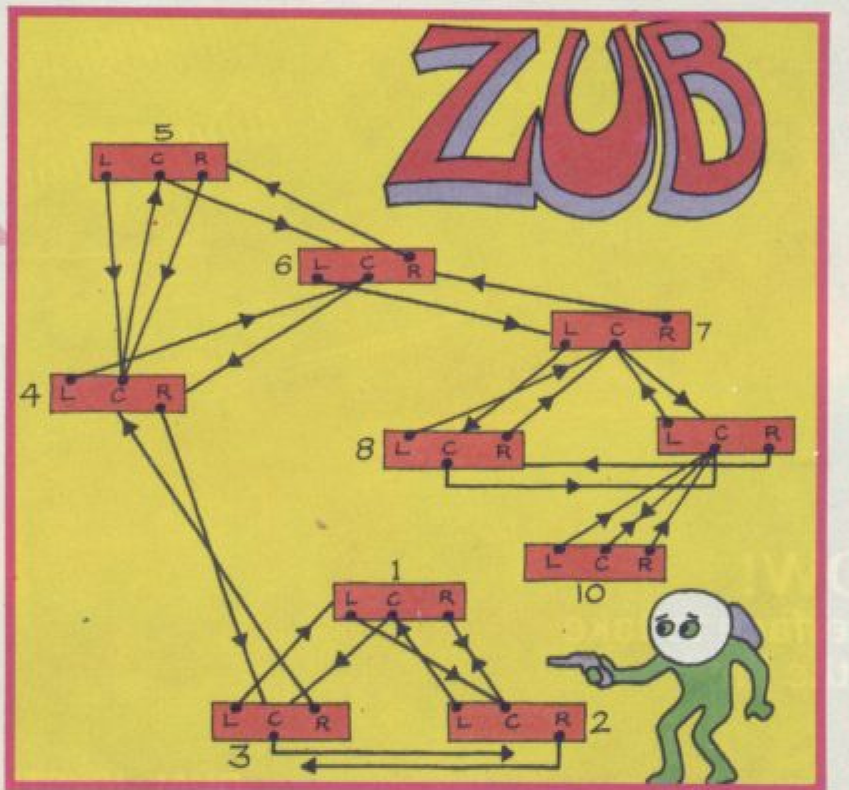
Cue end of progamme and start of map.

Music: "Don't you open that platform??"

Berk: "Hello, I'm Berk and you are a Berk for writing that last bit." Cue end of tips.

This next tip comes from probably the oldest swinger in town (no offence to John Gilbert obviously). Dave Wilmot from Bristol wrote to me concerning the absolutely wonderful game from Mastertronic, called



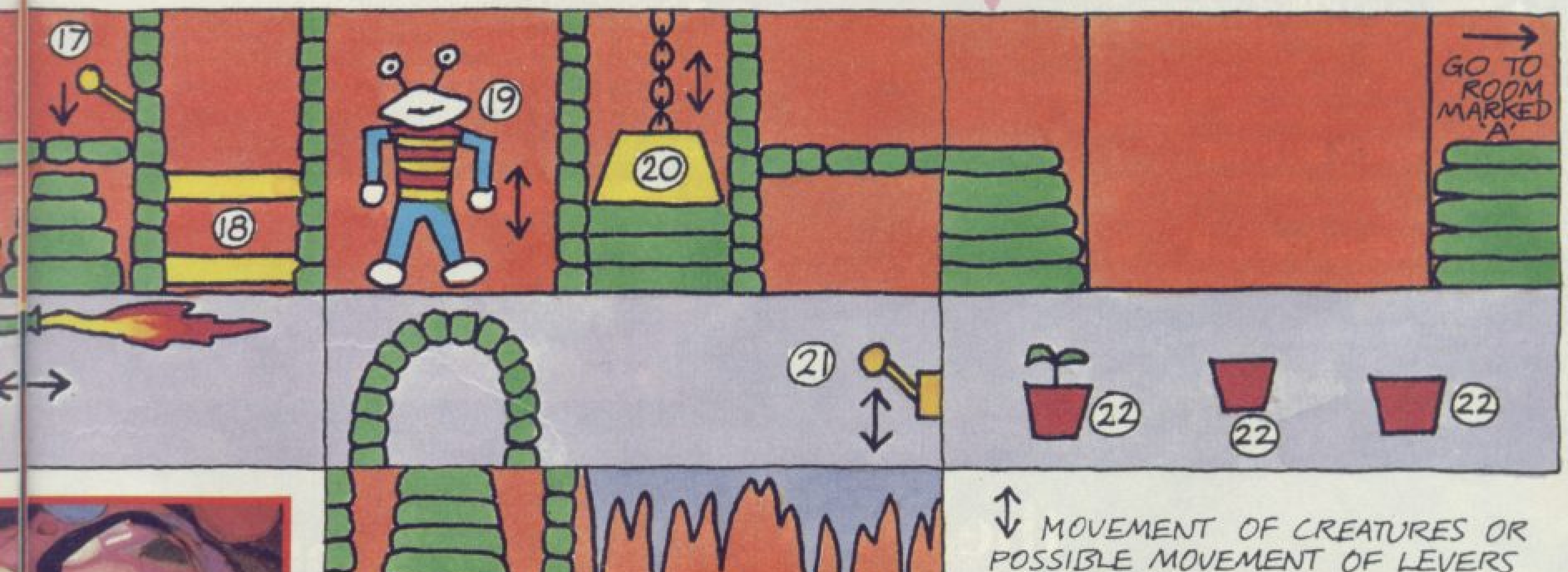


Zub.

"I bought **ZUB** on the 18th of December and completed it on the following day which is not bad going for a 39 year old. (Any advance on 39?)

Anyway, I have sent you a map showing the top three platforms on each planet and also where each platform will take you. (Train leaving at Platform 3 is bound for Clacton, that sort of thing.) However, the way you get up to these platforms is totally up to you!"

Quite self-explanatory I think.











JON RIGLAR'S ZAP CHAT

US Gold turn out some very ropey stuff – with the exception of **Gauntlet**, of course. However, I've got to admit that their

Infiltrator

looked mildly interesting. So, when a letter from M Harvey of Somerset arrived, I though it might be worth a look M. Harvey says:

"I completed US Gold's **Infiltrator** a long time ago in December. At the end of each mission the message 'You have completed your mission and the enemy have apparently re-fueled your ship and they even polished your chrome work' appears. The first ground mission is to simply photograph the enemy warplans. The second ground mission is to rescue Doctor Phineas Grump and destroy the enemy ICBM launch and tracking system. Finally, when you have successfully destroyed the last target, you will go back to the start."

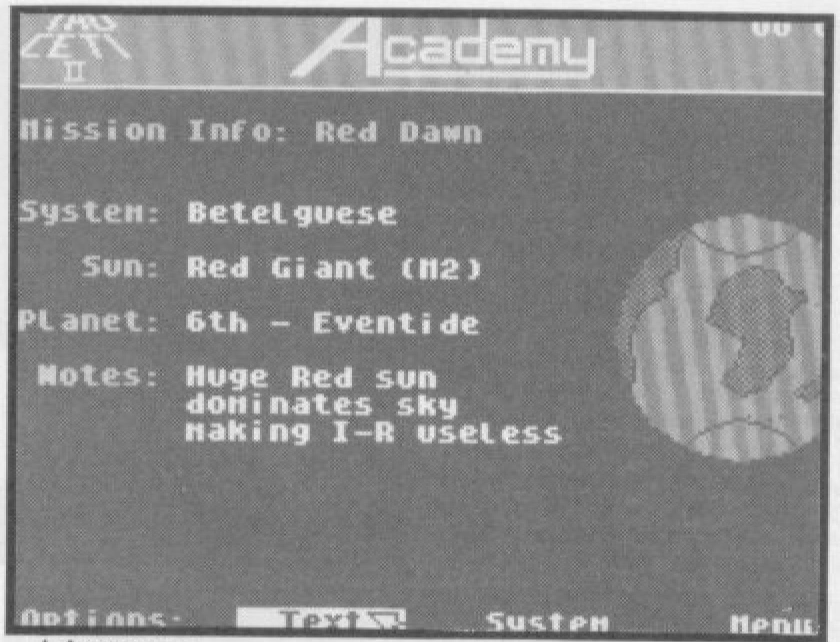
Another fabulous game that seems to be doing quite well is

Academy.

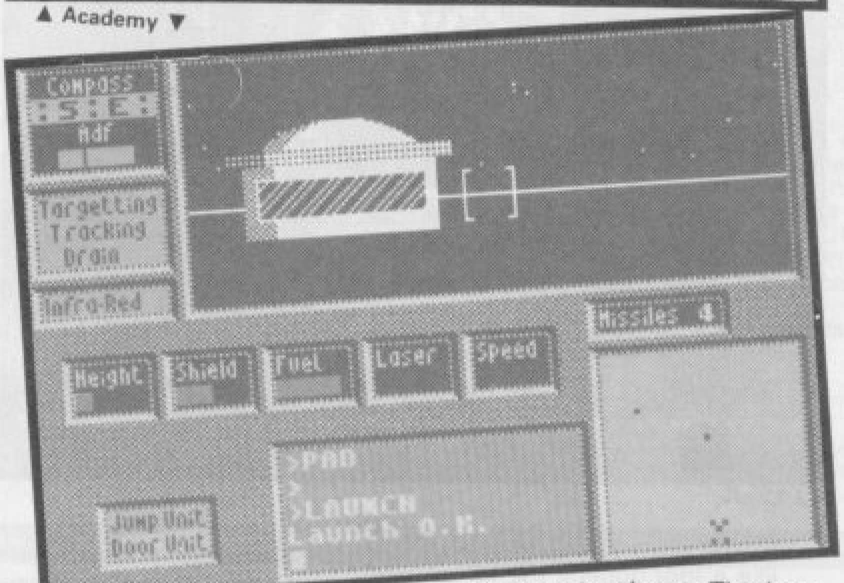
This game would rank as numero uno if I was allowed to choose a game. Because there are twenty missions, I am hardly going to be able to give you tips on every one, and so to kick off I'll take a look at the first four that are automatically loaded into the memory with the main program.

Mission One: If it moves. . .

You need to blast everything in sight to accumulate the necessary 100%. It is often best to design your own skimmer straight from the start. You will need to see when the fighters are after you, so you have to choose from a certain amount of flares or to buy the infra-red system. Personally, I prefer the flares because the infra red seems to distort the whole vision thus causing trouble. Also, when you see something on the scanner, for goodness sake don't go charging on at the target because you'll find that loads of other fighters will suddenly appear and zap you to pieces. The best method is simply to go slow, targetting all the time, and when the fighter gets into range, to stop completely. This stops any attacking fighters from surprising you.



▲ Academy ▼



Mission Two: Red Dawn.

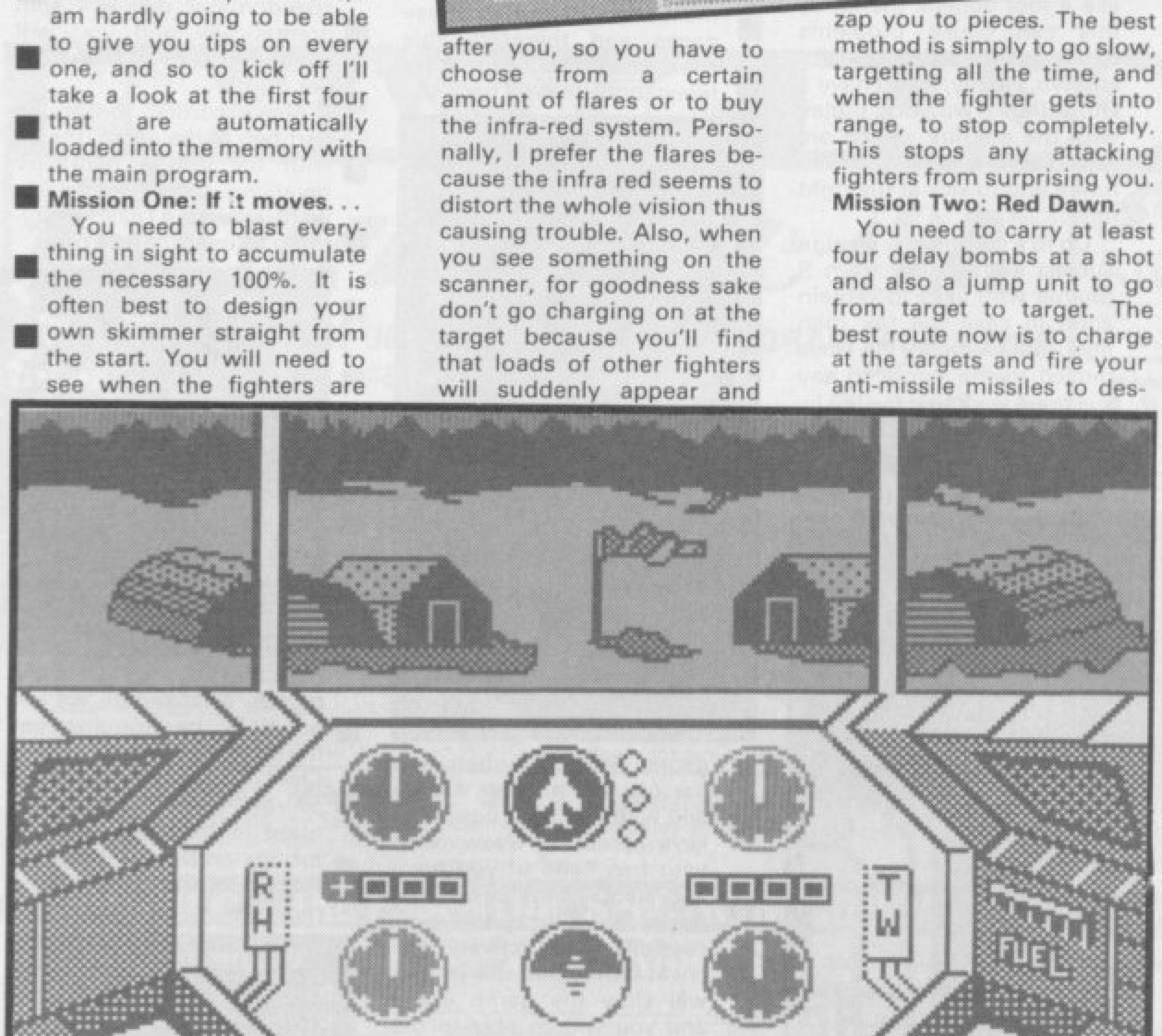
You need to carry at least four delay bombs at a shot and also a jump unit to go from target to target. The best route now is to charge at the targets and fire your anti-missile missiles to destroy any robot missiles. When you are at full speed and are heading right beside the robot factories drop a delay bomb and run for it. Provided you get away in time you will get rid of any target and succeed in your mission.

Mission Three: Meltdown.

By using delay bombs, you have to locate and destroy the reactor within fifteen minutes. Try to keep at a slow speed and avoid rushing into the enemy. By gradually 'picking off' the targets you very carefully creep up on the reactor and can drop a delay bomb to destroy it. Provided you destroy the reactor and also any fighters within the time allowed, you can get around 93% and successfully complete the mission.

Mission Four: Softly,softy.

This is perhaps the hardest of these four missions. You have to steer your skimmer very carefully through a minefield which is littered with fighters and anything else Pete Cooke could dream up. Again, the best tactic is to go dead slow and 'feel' your way through it. Stop every time a fighter or other nasty gets too close and destroy them before carrying on. Success is judged on the time you take to complete the mission and arrive back at your GLV unit. Whatever you do, don't crash into a mine because your energy level will be drastically reduced.



▲ Infiltrator

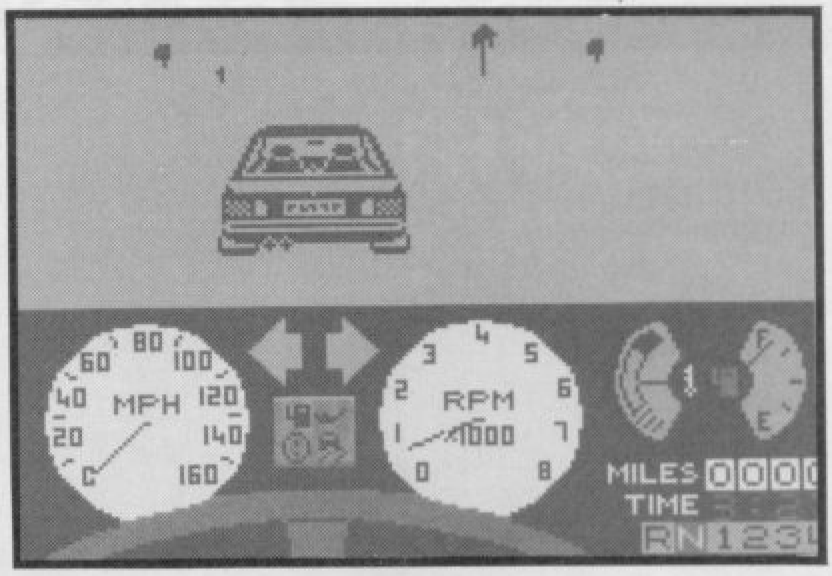
JON RIGLAR'S ZAP CHAT

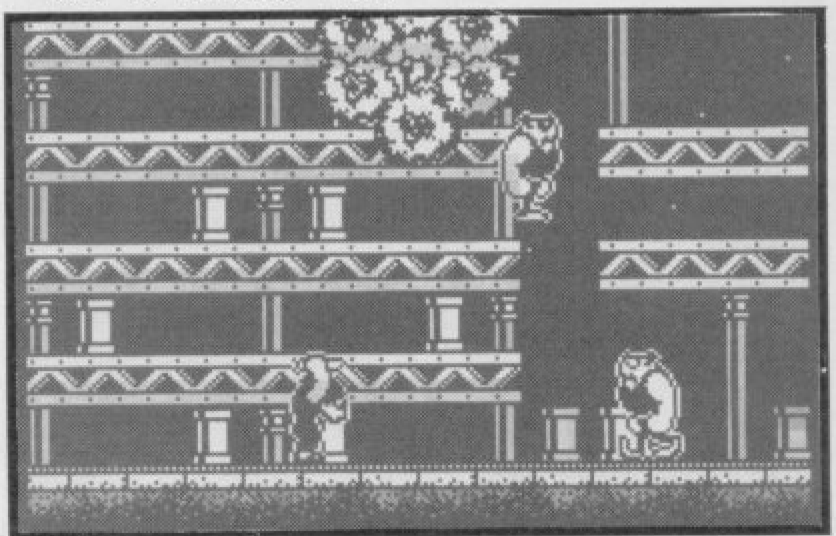
Being of a generous nature and a bit of a fool, Jon has also bought the Edge's martial art program

Shao-lin's Road.

"Play it with a joysitck, because on my copy at least, you are unable to redefine the keys. As they aren't stated in the inlay, you could spend ages searching the whole keyboard up and down for the necessary controls. The worst thing about the whole game is the fact that the keys are unresponsive and you'll take quite a while getting the hang of them. When you actually play the game, the best method is to stay at the top platform and wait for the fighters to come at you. That way, at least you cannot be killed by fighters landing on top of you. If you do get knocked down from the top platform, make sure that you are not in any danger and then make your way carefully back to the top. When you finally destroy all the fighters on level one, then you will find yourself face to face with a much larger thing that is a lot tougher. The only way of beating him is to kick him for all you are worth and then run away as soon as he returns.

To obtain the special weapons you need, either wait until a ball appears and then catch it or kill the fighters that have a spot on their shoulders. The best weapon is the one that allows you to fling er. .lumps of er. . stuff at the fighters. The other weapons are rather more difficult to control. On the second screen you have to move a little faster, and because the fighters also move a little faster, you will not be free to spend a lot of time at the top of the screen. The fighters with the pigtails are very hard to kill and also to avoid, so it's them it is best to leave them until all the others have been killed and use one of the 'special' weapons on them. Screen three seems to be identical to screen one and it is quite easy to complete. Never start the game by standing like a fool outside the lift as this can cause problems when you come to try and survive. Finally, if you have a QuickShot Two, don't play with the autofire switch on, as this affects your ability to move and to kick at the right time.

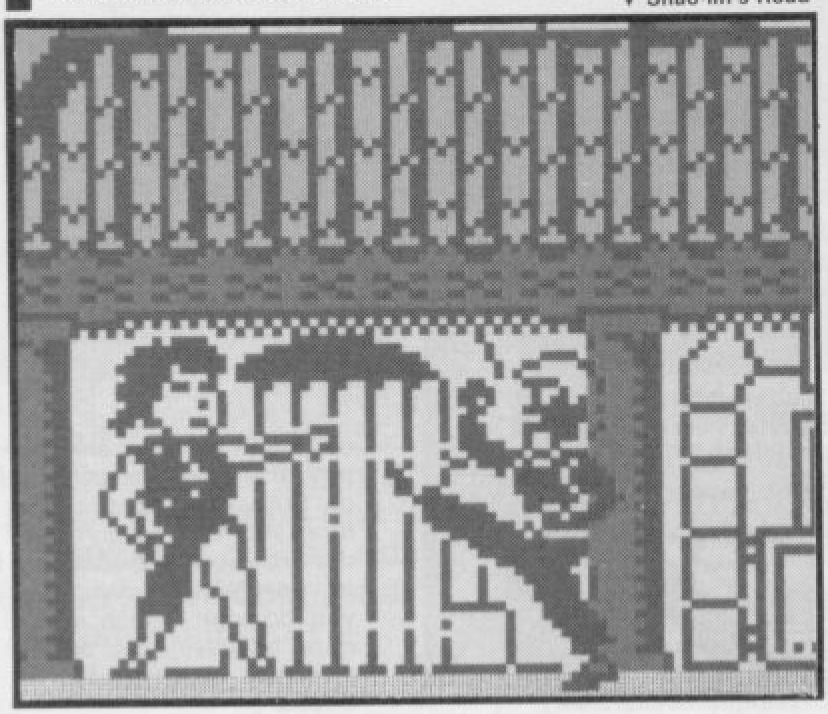




▲ Cobra

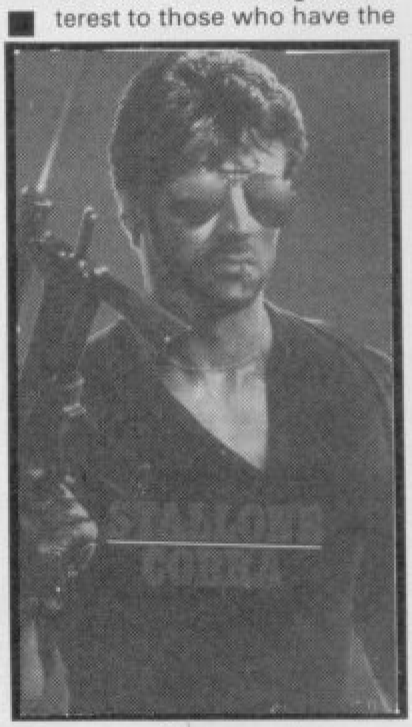
On to a completely foreign subject and a letter from S Sharpe who likes to remain anon in case the tax men find out where he has moved to. He wrote to say that there is a cheat facility in Ocean's latest magic release

▼ Shao-lin's Road



Cobra.

The game itself has not been mentioned before in these pages and therefore this cheat should be of great interest to those who have the



game. Anyway, when you are playing it, grab a coin and with this hold down the keys M and N. Now, with your free hand (if you have any hands left) press the Space Bar. Doing this successfully will activate the cheat facility and this in turn will slow the game down and you will be able to get somewhere. According to S, you will find that this will only work if you have your joystick connected.

Perhaps the least 'raved' over game released from Ocean is

Nightmare Rally

However, obviously a good few people actually went out and bought it because this month I've received loads of letters concerning it. Gary McDougall and at least six other people wrote to say that it has a tremendous bug in it. If you press the letter Q and Symbol Shift at the same time then when the game starts you will see that it is just like normal except that when you press the beforementioned keys the speedometer dial will spin dramatically and you will zoom off at over 160 miles per hour!

Also according to Gary, in part two of the game (the bit with the purple floor) try reversing, then later go forward whizzing past everything at over the 160 mark.



That's it for another month. Next month we will hopefully be bringing you the new Zapchat Challenge Chart for **Gauntlet** and, of course, some more great maps in *Mapchat*. Look out for tips on **Double Take, Defcom** and much, much more!

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+3 EXCLUSIVE

"a disc drive could radically change spectrum software"

Amstrad's 128K+2 was just the start! Another new Spectrum machine is on the way this summer – called the 128K+3.

And it'll be the first Spectrum ever to be able to use disc software as standard via a new built-in Amstrad Spectrum 3 inch disc unit.

The new model is apparently intended to replace the 128K+2 which is expected to be chopped in price to around £129.

The built-in disc drive means that at last a disc standard for the Spectrum will be established.

From a software point of view the 128K+3 means that huge games – similar to the best of the US Commodore 64 disc-based programs will be possible. The way these work is to load in sections of the game as you play – deleting those areas of the game you've already played through from memory, as you go.

The 128K+3 will have a standard +2 keyboard with a 3" disc drive on the right-hand side where the tape player is currently situated. The case is likely to be different to the +2 and is believed to be closer in appearance to the Amstrad 6128.

The disc drive will use a new version of the AmsDos operating system used on the 6128 but adapted by Locomotive software for the Spectrum.

The disc operations will use all the old Microdrive filing commands which still exist in the Basic and the system will automatically detect when a disc drive is present and default appropriately.

It seems unlikely Amstrad will offer CPM compatability on the +3, although it would be technically easy, and may be offered by outside manufacturers.

You *will* still be able to load up tape software on the +3, though, via the standard *Ear* and *Mic* sockets and a separate tape recorder.

The machine will also include a built-in paralled printer port.

Amstrad also plans to produce a demo-disc of entertainment software to accompany the launch of the machine. A number of names have been mooted but Ocean could be in the running – it produced the 128K games for the original 128K.

Amstrad is holding a conference this month (February) to ensure software support for the new machine.

Software houses have already indicated their enthusiasm for any Amstrad supported Spectrum disc system (see industry predictions SU February). First releases are likely to be games compilations or enhanced versions of existing software. In the long run, however, a disc drive could radically change Spectrum software making possible much longer, more complicated and more detailed games and increasing the viability of more serious uses for the machine.

No firm details on pricing are available but the 128K+3 is expected to retail for around £199. Amstrad is unlikely to cross the £200 threshold■



Predictions SU Feb

● "I'd like to see a cheap disc drive – it would stimulate software development" **(Rod Cousins: Electric Dreams)**

● "I'd like to see . . . a cheap standard Amstrad disc drive" **(Mark Strachan: Domark)**

● "I would like an official disc drive very much please" **(Andrew Hewson: Hewson)**

UNDER RAPS!

Ocean and Epyx tie up yet again to produce **World Games,** for US Gold – it's an incestuous old world isn't it? Visit Scotland, Russia, Japan and the US to take part in eight events. There's Sumo Wrestling, Weight Lifting, Caber Tossing and Bull Riding, to name but a few. If the graphics are as good as Winter Games it'll be a WOW – on the other hand...

Icon, Lothlorian's inhouse programming team, is busy writing **Stellar Holocaust,** for A 'n' F. Written by science fiction doyen Bob Shaw with a computer game in mind you take the role of an intergalactic bounty hunter who's transporting three criminals across space. You crash and when the wrappers come off hyper-sleep you discover the planetary system you've landed on is about to be destroyed. You're then in a race against time to find the one functioning ship in the system. A well-worn theme but, woa, it's a Bob Shaw story.

Ken Wright, author of **Napoleon at War,** has come up trumps again for CCS with **Yanke.** It features two battles from the American Civil War but, despite CCS' new 128 policy, there'll be no expanded version available – at least not yet.

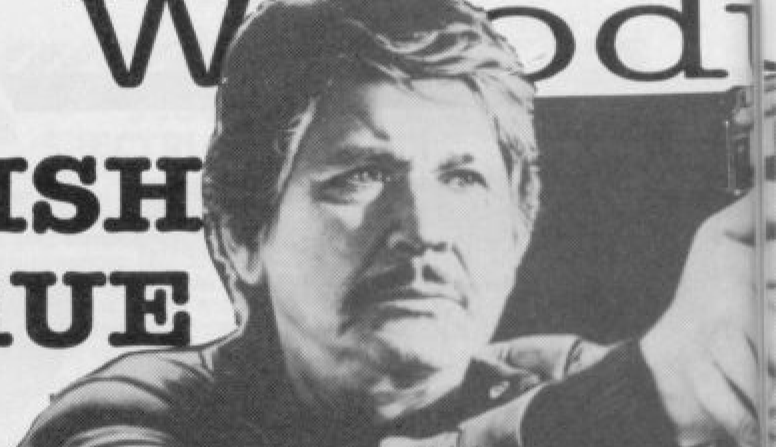
Astron Products is staging the **Zulu Wars** for CCS. The strategy game – subject matter fairly obvious – is in two versions, one on yer original 48K Spectrum, the other a bonefide expanded 128K packages which works on the Plus 2.

Gannon Designs, the team responsible for much much of the Bug-Byte budget range, is coding **The Hunt For Red October** for Argus Press Software. The game's based on Tom Clancy's mega-chiller which is about to have its movie premier. It's about a chase for a state-of-the-art Russian sub whose crew want to defect – sounds like a simulation to me.

Tigress Marketing is designing the Spectrum versions of ***Ziggurat*** *and* ***Triaxos*** *for Ariolasoft.* ***Ziggurat*** *is an arcade adventure set in of Ancient Egypt. You're on the first floor of King Tut's condo – and you're on your way up to the penthouse suite where the gold's hidden.*
Triaxos, *meanwhile, is another space fling – you know the sort of thing.*

NEWSDATE MARCH

DEATH WISH COMES TRUE



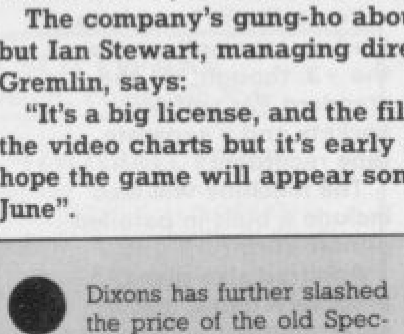
Bullets fly and villians die as Charles Bronson and his band of commonfolk vigilantes get set to hit the Spectrum in Death Wish III. **It is the first of the trilogy of films to be converted into a computer game.**

Gremlin Graphics, of Trailbrazer **and** Avenger **fame, is negotiating for the license of this bloody little number and intends to turn it into a justic-for-all arcade game.**

The company's gung-ho about the concept but Ian Stewart, managing director of Gremlin, says:

"It's a big license, and the film's already in the video charts but it's early days yet. We hope the game will appear sometime around June".

Dixons has further slashed the price of the old Spectrum 128K to sell off last remaining stocks. You can now get it for just £89.95. It's a stand-alone offer, no joysticks, software or cuddly toys are include in the price but, with the 128K+2 still at £159 it'll prove appealing to people who want to cash in on the sudden rush of 128K software expected before too long - there's a Rip Van Winkle prediction for you. The company is obviously trying to get rid of stocks before the 128K+3 is launched, but the word is that Dixons never bought vast amounts of 128Ks – or 128K+2s. They're obviously always the first to know...



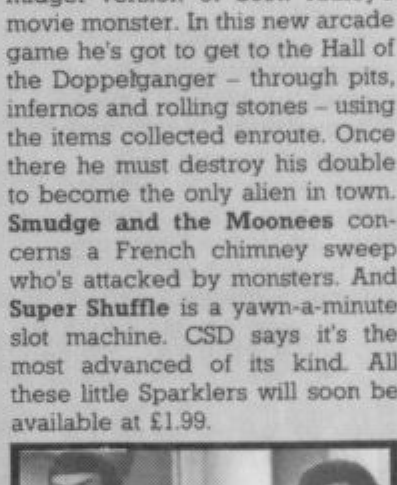
Gunship, Microprose's US smash hit chopper simulation, is to be converted from the C64 (aargh!) to the Spectrum. It's cockpit display may be similar to **Tomahawk,** from Digital Integration, but there's a lot more in the way of selecting targets, picking up cargoes, and arming the beast. More death and destruction guaranteed when it's released during late summer.

Everything's just dandy now with **Dandy** but some early release versions of the Electric Dreams game were badly bugged. According to **SU** reader James Cox there were several bugs in the two copies of the game he received. The game crashed on entering a porthole in Dungeon 2 Level 2, entering a porthole in Dungeon 3 Level 3 and in two-player mode where the second player will not move. Also, in two-player mode, the character goes off one side of the screen and appears on the other. Electric Dreams wasn't exactly speedy in responding to his complaints but, when it did, the firm admitted the fault. "We have now discovered that there was, in fact, a faulty batch distributed and we are doing everything in our power to see that all copies are replaced as soon as possible." The replacement was to be sent in the 'very near future'. It hasn't arrived yet. Any more for any more? Anyone with the bugged version should contact Electric Dreams for a replacement.

Get Dexter and **Doomsday Blues,** two fabulous 3D games from France, are to be converted to Spectrum by Infogrames. The names of the games were originally coined by PSS, who introduced the Amstrad versions in Britain, but Infogrames has gone back to the original French names, **Crafton** and **Eden Blues.** Both are edge-on **Knight Lore** style efforts, but very cleverly done – at least they were on the Amstrad. We'll have to wait 'till June to see how the Spectrum versions come out.

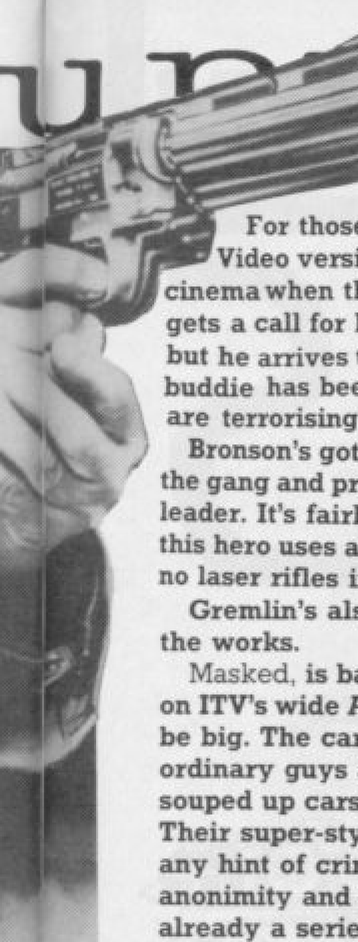


New budget biggies from CSD. **Little Alien** is not a midget version of Scott Ridley's movie monster. In this new arcade game he's got to get to the Hall of the Doppelganger – through pits, infernos and rolling stones – using the items collected enroute. Once there he must destroy his double to become the only alien in town. **Smudge and the Moonees** concerns a French chimney sweep who's attacked by monsters. And **Super Shuffle** is a yawn-a-minute slot machine. CSD says it's the most advanced of its kind. All these little Sparklers will soon be available at £1.99.



Still no firm release date from Beyond on **Star Trek** or **Dark Sceptre** and now they're the only two products under development by the company. This either means the label is in trouble or it means they should be finished fairly pronto (take your pick). The ST version of **Star Trek** is currently being played tested in the States – by the licensees – and once that's released – (Stardate: 24.9. Anybody's guess) – the Spectrum version should follow shortly. Then of course there's **Dark Sceptre.** Word is it's finished. So where's the master? When will it be duplicated? Nobody seems to know, least of all Beyond. Don't know what's happening to BT. These days you can't even get the phones fixed, to call them and find out...

upr yot



For those who haven't seen the Guild Video version or couldn't get into the cinema when the film was around, Bronson gets a call for help from an old army buddie but he arrives too late at his friend's flat. His buddie has been killed by a street gang who are terrorising the neighbourhood.

Bronson's got to get the community to fight the gang and provide summary justice for it's leader. It's fairly meaty stuff and to think, this hero uses and old fashioned gun. Strictly no laser rifles in this one.

Gremlin's also got two other big titles in the works.

Masked, is based on the cartoon series run on ITV's wide Awake Club which looks set to be big. The cartoon's about a group of ordinary guys and gals who jaunt around in souped up cars, vans and juggernaut lorries. Their super-style masks, which they don at any hint of crime or danger, give them anonimity and futuristic powers. There is already a series of paperback books about



the series and a weekly *Mask* comic from the people who produce *2000AD*

The company has also signed up Walt Disney's *Basil the Great Mouse Detective.* The film, shown in Britain just before Christmas was less than a huge success but the game will have large sprite graphics, lots of colour and lots of action and should look a little like Mike Singleton's Dark Sceptre – when that finally arrives.

It's pretty ambitious but Gremlin has until November to turn its story boards into games.

TWTMTW
THAT WAS THE MONTH THAT WAS

What!! Oh, no! You'd have thought Amstrad would have got this sort of thing out of its system with its CPC 664 fiasco.

I'm afraid not – and it's going to start all over again. . .

First the good news. We've got another new Spectrum and it's just great. There's going to be a real Spectrum disc standard at last, and Amstrad's backing will give software houses the confidence to go ahead and develop disc software for the Spectrum. Not only that, but the 128K+3 is pretty good value.

The reason why a disc is important is it means – as is possible with the best of the American C64 software – that you can get real-time loading. Huge games can be written which load in in sections into the Spectrum's Ram disc, actually as the gameplay is in progress. Meaning a significant advance in game complexity and bigger and more varied graphics.

But what about all those who've just bought a 128K+2? Or indeed all those with 128s? Right now there doesn't seem to be any plan to sell a stand-alone disc unit to allow you to up-grade. Why not?

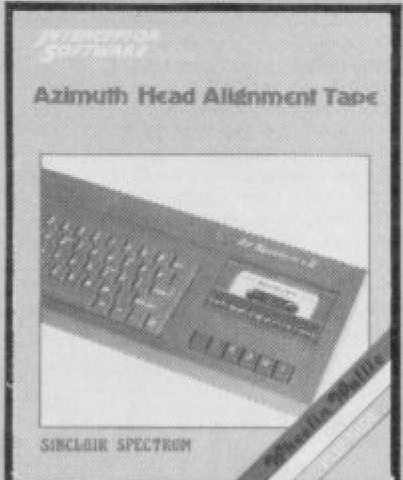
Come on Amstrad – doesn't that seem a bit daft? The technology's all there, so let's have an add-on disc drive up-grade■

● First **Rogue Trooper** signed with Piranha. Then **Judge Dredd** was snapped up by Melbourne House. Now **Nemesis the Warlock,** yet another bone-cracking character from 2000AD, has been sighted at Martech.

Admittedly the company's last license, **Tarzan,** was a mega-flop but it hopes that some of the IPC comic's magic will rub off. Nemesis is the leader of the resistance against Torquemada, Grand Master of the Terminators and lord of the Termight Empire. His holy quest is the extinction of all alien life forms, Nemesis as good guy must stop him. Our hero wades through dozens of different highly graphic screens, knocks out his foes, overcomes obstacles and pops his bones back into joint every once in a while. As he gets near his foe Torquemada's face appears at the bottom of the screens.



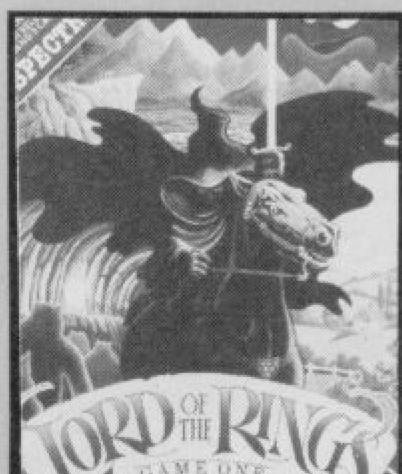
● CRL's **3D Game Maker** was originally due for release at Christmas but had to be delayed because the programmers hadn't finished it (so what's new). The package, which creates games in the **Knightlore** and **Fairlight** mould at only slightly more than a touch of a key, is now likely to appear in March and, according to CRL, will be all the better for the delay.



● A solution to 128K+2 tape loading problems – of which there are many and various. Interceptor has launched an Azimuth Head Alignment package with priceless instructions on how to mess around with the Amstrad's Datacorder – at just £8.99. The package cost £8.99 from most shops.

● Novelist Tom Clancy is having two of his best-selling books turned into computer games. Sid Meier, US author of **F-15 Strike Eagle** and **Silent Service** – the latter soon to be seen on the Spectrum – is programming **Red Storm Rising** for simulation software house Microprose. **Red Storm Rising** is Clancy's recent novel set in World War Three that's apparently sold more than a million copies in hardback.

● **Lord of the Rings – The Arcade game** is, on its way from Melbourne House. The game's based on the Ring War where Orcs and Nazgul battle the fair races of Middle Earth. Coding's by Consult, a company with Mike – **Star Trek** – Singleton connections. The team's recently completed **Dark Sceptre** for Beyond, so it's likely the new game will include large animated characters. Melbourne House keeps tight-lipped about the affair. It has no firm release date and, indeed, doesn't know whether the programmers' proposals can be translated to the Spectrum. (Oh sure, ST only – cynical ed)

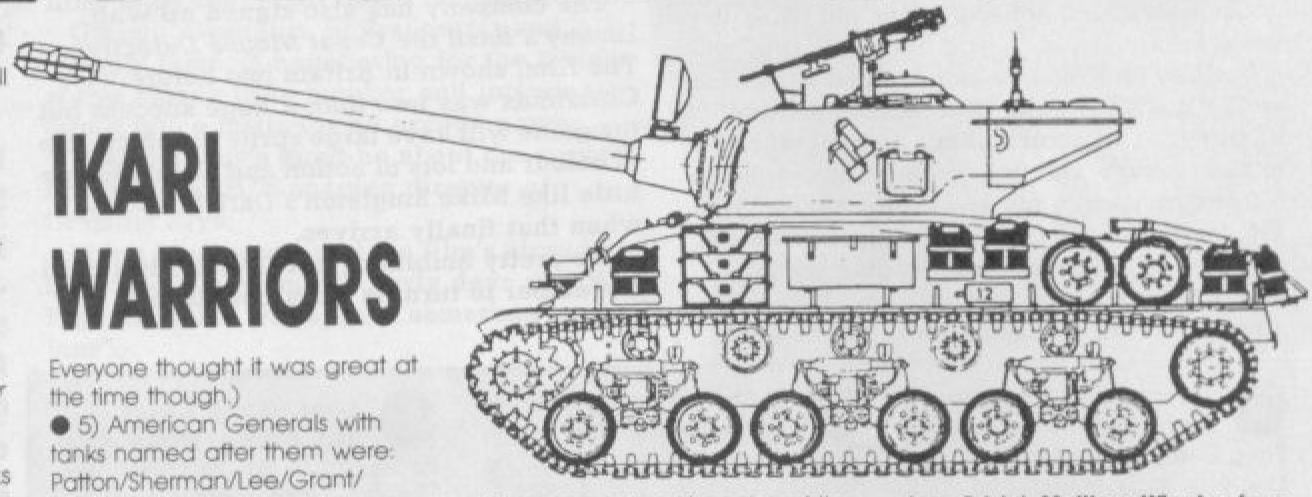


● The Spectrum is still king! Early sales figures show that Spectrum was tops of the computer Christmas pressy list. The Spectrum outsold its nearest rival, the Commodore 64 by nearly two to one with 45.9 per cent of all micros being sold. The C64 only managed a paltry 24.2 per cent. Who doubted it wouldn't? **Gauntlet,** from US Gold, won the software stakes – with 17.9 per cent of the Gallup poll.

COMPETITION

WINNERS

IKARI WARRIORS



Crikey. You're a canny bunch. We just couldn't pull the wool over your eyes with our supremely difficult Tank competition in the December issue. Despite slipping in some dashed tricky questions, nearly everyone came up with the right answers. (Still we managed to catch quite a few with their Panzers down. – Ed.)

As predicted, a few cretins managed to decide that *Kramer versus Kramer* was a war film, Churchill was an American General and there were no tanks in Kelly's Heroes. Also lurking in the mailbag were the supremely useless: "For your information, the Mk 3.5 264H Peoplekiller was only brought into service. . ." Letters. Thanks guys.

For the record, then, the answers were as follows:

- 1) A (The first tank was used in World War I)
- 2) Trick question. Rommel flitted about in Panzer IIIs, IVs and Tigers. We accepted any of these, but not Panzer on its own, 'cos that literally means "tank". Not v. specific.
- 3) B (Amphibious tanks are called ducks)
- 4) B (Kramer versus Kramer was a rather dreadful film about divorce etc. – hence the tilte – Everyone thought it was great at the time though.)
- 5) American Generals with tanks named after them were: Patton/Sherman/Lee/Grant/ Pershing. Any two would have been accepted.
- 6) D (Despite popular belief, the Mini Metro is not a tank – Volvos maybe. . .)

The ten lucky winners who get to fiddle around with stacks of model glue and easy-to-swallow mystery plastic blobs (ie a model of a Sherman Tank) *and* get to play with Elite's new smash Ikari Warriors are. . .

Simon Lilley from Northants, Jeffrey Soutar of Livingston, Mr Lee from Twickenham, John Thompson of Chester, Paul Wassal from Cheshire, Mark Turner from Wales, Mr Bickform from Cornwall, S Sistern from Peterborough, P M Chub from Norfolk and Isidro Juan Zoroza from Argentina (renowned for its netball team)

The rest of the people – 40 – on this page only get copies of the game. (shame):

Mark Bennett from Newcastle, Innes Kickman from Worthing, Paul Clarke from London, Clive Jenner from Norfolk, Robert Salisbury from Kent, Brian Sherry from Essex, Gennaro Citro from Hendon, Paul Carr from Yorkshire, Leslie Davidson from Ayrshire, Stephen Powney from Yorkshire, Thomas Reid from Perth, Daniel Hall from Birmingham, Keith Walkley from Mid-Glamorgan, Simon Goodier from Lancs, Jonathan Bradbeer from Sussex, Colin Murphy from Ireland, Steven Hopper from Norfolk, D Ward from Northants, George Telfer from Angus, Thom Clayton from Kent, Chay Lawrence from Lincs, Michael Bremmer from Northern Ireland, Ross Nichols from Norfolk, Graham Paul Hollingdale from Bolton, Wayne Grant from Bucks, David Harris from Argyll, Humberto Joaquim C Dinis Lopes from Portugal, Mark Warner from Bristol, Matthew Wharton from Wiltshire, A Fillery from Nailsea, Alan Brown from Berwickshire, Ian Wyaer from Kent, Adam Soltan from Sweden, Stuart Crisp fro Streatham, David Malcolm from Dubai, Master (pah!) D Bradley from Leicestershire, Scott Hutchinson from Edinburgh, Keith Holdway from Cheshire, Brian Reavley from Notts and Kevin Hart from Rochester.

● Please note:

Elite has put the release date of Ikari Warriors **back until June. Sorry about the bad news but you can be sure that if your name appears above you will be one of the very first to get hold of the game when Elite gets its act together. . .**

SAGA COMPLIMENT

Here we are then. Hold your breath no longer. Here are the results of our completely fantastic Compliment competition.

The correct answer:

We asked you to pick the odd one out of these phrases:
Opus
Last Word
Cambell Systems
Masterfile
Microl
Saga Systems

The answer was, obviously, Microl, as it has nothing to do with Compliment at all. Anyone who got that wrong should be shot. The rest of you, Congratulations! We had zillions of entries but most of them were wrong anyway, so here are the names that count:



The winners:

First prize of a cracking Saga System (Clackaway keyboard, spinaway discs, swirlsome printer and splendid soft-ware) goes too – opens the very tasteful gold envelope – C Wills from Fife.

The rest of the winners here get a set of ultra-fabby programs: **Last Word** *(word processor)* **Masterfile** *(database) and* **Omnicalc** *(spreadsheet) Gary Lee Davies from Liverpool, G Kirk from Hitchin, Matthew Dunn of Stapenhill, John Van Breda of Hailsham, Paul Kelly from Huddersfield, A L Turner from Cardiff, M Usher from Stockport, Albert Isham of London, Roger Sutton from Maidenhead, and Richard Kalton of Cheshire.*

INHERITANCE



Your dear old aunt's poped her sox just in the nick of time.

You're up to your light bulbs in debt, sitting on a worm worn mattress and twisting a tightly knotted noose through your fingers when the caretaker delivers a life saving telegram. Aunty's left you a wacking parcel of money to sweep clear away all your problems. All you've got to do is fly to Las Vegas and win a million dollars in one night. Do that and her huge fortune is yours.

By itself the problem might be simple but this game's in three *Loads* of logic crunching conundrums.

When you first load the game you'd be forgiven for thinking that it's some sort of a sequel to **Vera Cruz** – Infogrames' first epic. You're in a besit this time with a sink – complete with toothbrush holder, suitcase, tallboy, and no instructions but, the **Vera Cruz** *Pick-up/Drop/Inspect* cursor is there to let you scan the scene with joystick or keyboard.

You've got to escape from your high rise and travel across town before you get the 'plane to Vegas. You're on the seventh floor and the lift stops at almost every level where you'll be accosted by an irate friend or associate demanding that you hand back objects that they've loaned you. If you don't have the particular item you're sent back to your room to collect it – and time keeps ticking away...

All the objects on loan are stored in the draws and cupboards of the tallboy. Pick up the bag with the cursor, select an object and drop it inside. The bag'll hold six objects, but you can pick up the $200 on the plate by the window and stuff it in your pocket. Look after that money.

If you play properly, you'll only have to make one trip back to your room to pick up more goodies. The people who pop up on the various floors look fairly randomly distributed but there are only four or five of them. At first you'll have to take pot luck with what belongs to whom, but soon you'll see that the gun belongs to the man with the wicked looking face, the iron belongs to the woman in curlers and the comb belongs to the swarthy-looking dude with the greasy looking hair. Real stereotypes.

It's a tight run thing. If everything goes to plan you'll only have a few moments to dash down the final flight of stairs, out of the doors and into the waiting taxi.

On to the airport and aboard the plane where you could be hi-jacked. If so, open your trusty bag and hand the hijackers what they want.

Once the plane lands, and if you're still alive, you'll be taken to the Casino where you have to play Jackpot, Boule and Craps. They're all games of chance so this is the part of the game which is totally out of your hands. You just have to choose the numbers and symbols and hope for the best. This Casino end-game is the weakest part of the package.

It's a pity. You'll find the first two sections of **Inhertiance** fun but be really let down by the third■

FACTS BOX

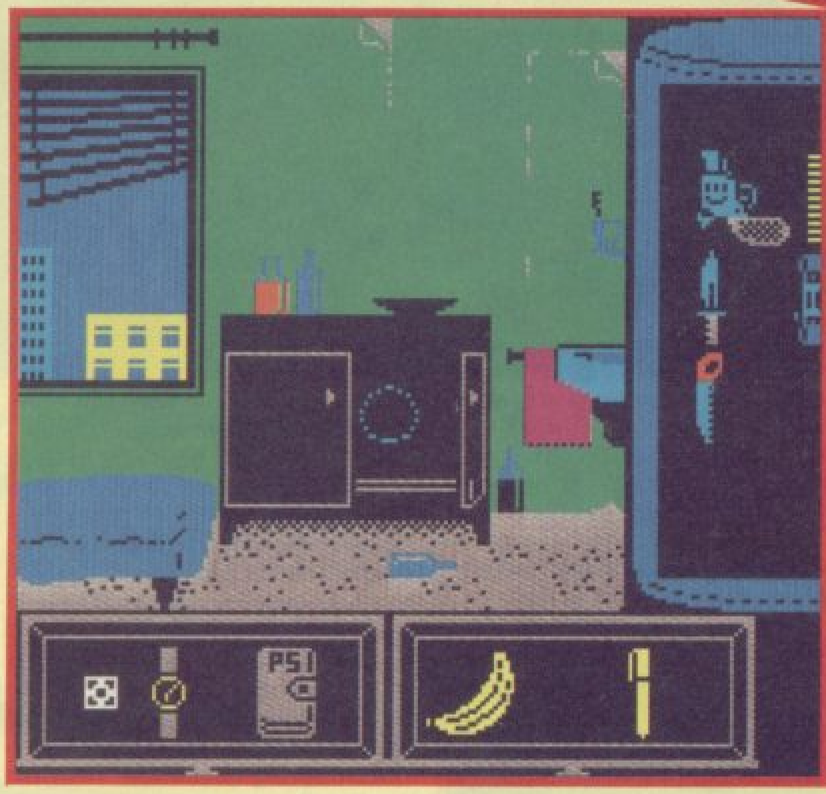
Innovative strategy game with stylish graphics. Parts 1 and 2 are ace, but be prepared to find Part 3 is real iffy

THE INHERITANCE
Label: Infogrames
Price: £9.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: John Gilbert

★★★★★





SOFTWARE STAR RATINGS

All software reviews carry a star rating, the basis of which is value for money programming, graphics, speed, speech and sound presentation and addictiveness

★★★★★ **Solid gold. Buy it**

★★★★☆ **Well worth the folding stuff**

★★★☆☆ **Pretty average**

★★☆☆☆ **Very poor. Probably over-priced too**

★☆☆☆☆ **A total rip-off. Complain loudly**



Each review carries an icon which shows the type of software.

Arcade is for animated games, which in general, reduce the life span of your joysticks.

Toolkit covers programming utilities which improve the quality of home-made software or packages which make machine code easier to write.

Work Out, software which can be used in the home, such as car maintenance or home finance.

Strategy and Simulation are games where thought, planning and judgement are the principle skills required.

Adventure includes either graphic or text adventures.

NEMESIS

It was a hit in the arcades, is it a hit on the Spectrum? Konami did a good job with Jailbreak (reviewed elsewhere this issue) but Nemesis was a game with such a powerful mixture of high speed and stunning graphics it always seemed the more difficult conversion task.

Nemesis for those who have never seen the coin-op is a highly advanced eighties permutation of that old seventies classic, Scramble in which you, lone space cruiser, weaved your way through ever narrower and more twisted caverns dodging assaults by alien ships and ground bases that lobbed things at you.

Nemesis is about piloting your space cruiser around a series of landscapes (technology has gone beyond mere caverns). There are still assorted spaceships blasting away at you and ground objects attacking you but the size, variety and sheer viciousness of the opponents has increased exponentially (that's a lot).

Space cruisers look pretty much as they always did in such games, but as you play Nemesis you soon realise that graphics have come a pretty long way from the days of little blocks with bits on the top. In Nemesis, there are gun emplacements that walk, giant skeletons which rise ominously from the tunnel walls and enormous alien battleships that fire missles, volcanoes and an assortment of peculiar objects bizarre in the way that only computer programmers know how.

It isn't all a matter of flying as fast as you can. Not only is it sometimes vital to vary your speed to get past obstacles, but sometimes you just don't have a choice. At certain points the program 'stops'. At one point you find yourself trapped betwixt a couple of volcanoes spewing surprisingly cylindrical lava, you just have to grin and bear it. At another point you have to attack an enormous spaceship which will not let you pass.

There are chances in the game to increase your fire power from the piddling little laser you begin with. In some sections of the game, you'd better have exactly the right weapon or Blam! – time to



FACTS BOX

An excellent conversion of the wonderful coin-op. Straightforward gameplay but some stunning animated graphics

NEMESIS
Label: Konami
Author: in-house
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★★

SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC

ENDURO

Motorbike racing has been done to death recently but, undaunted, Activision has pressed ahead with the most faithful and compelling coin-op conversion I've seen since the launch of the 128 – Enduro Racer.

Sega's game doesn't settle for the standard put-the-bike-in-the-middle-of-the-screen and move the scenery. It's not a little see-through biker either but a large, fully animated character who leans forwards on his bike when you press the joystick forward, puts a steadying foot down when you turn left or right and rears into a wheelie when you pull back.

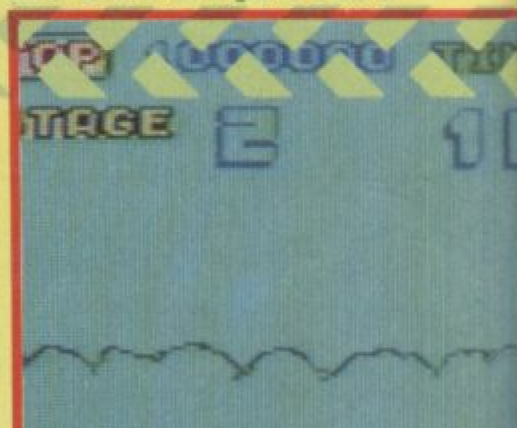
Your bike can reach 199km per/h, if pushed, but because the joystick's used for wheelies when you pull back you'll have to keep a finger on the fire button to slow it down. Success depends on high speed, but the slower you go the more manoeuvrable the bike becomes. Then there's the rocks, lorries and peaks which pop up in the latter levels.

At first it's quite simple. A dense forest track with low-grade walls, over which you have to wheelie, boulders in the middle of the road which you mustn't run over, and other racers who will continually jostle you for position.

I had little trouble avoiding the boulders on the first level and I wasn't able to knock other bikers off their machines. The walls, strung at intervals across the course proved a more intimidating challenge. They're rather like the water jumps at a horse jumping event – there's usually something nasty waiting for you on the other side.

In the case of Enduro Racer the obstacles are rocks scattered along several yards of the course. As with any good simulator/arcade game a bit of





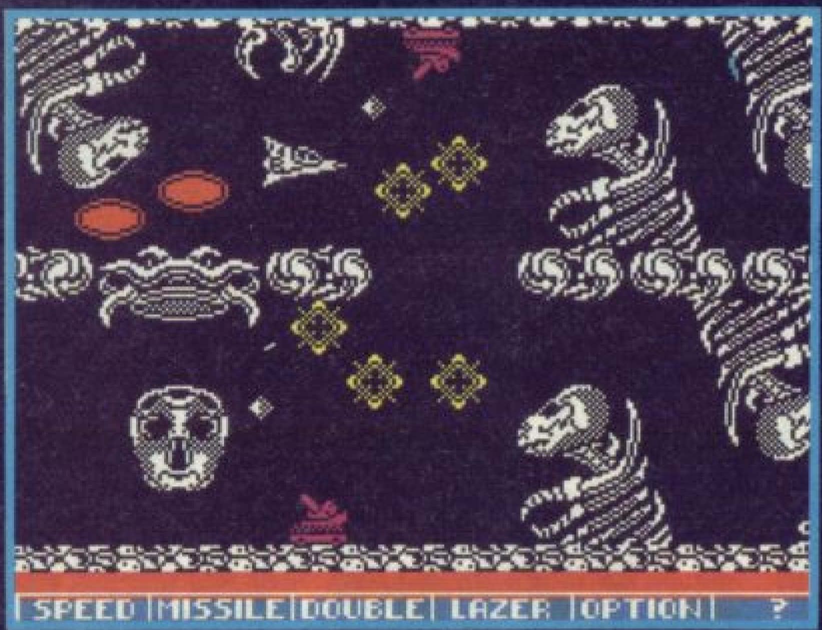
FACTS BOX

This Sega coin-op conversion puts other top software houses to shame. It sets a new standard for arcade tie-ins

ENDURO RACER
Label: Electric Dreams
Price: £7.95
Joysticks: various
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: John Gilbert

★★★★★



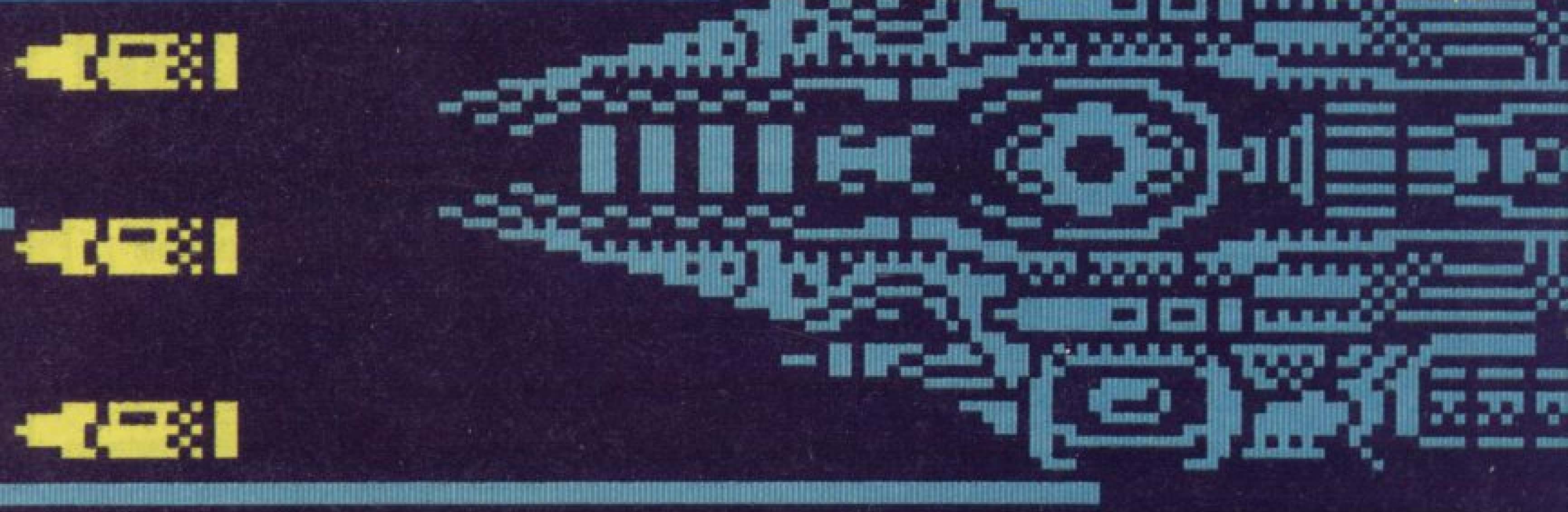
hand over the ole battle cruiser ignition keys.

The programming is pretty good, but the big problem with moving lots of shapes all at once, some of them very big, is smoothness. All things considered the amount of jerkyness is absolutely minimal.

The gameplay, fairly easy to begin with and horrendous at the finish. Funnily enough the quality of the graphics roughly matches the difficulty of the level i.e. the really stunning stuff comes, almost as a reward, towards the end of the game.

An unashamed shoot-em-up but an excellent conversion of the arcade game and, in places, graphically excellent – check out the alien creatures that rise and fall and the grusome faces that drift around the screen. Scramble for the present day■

ARCADE REVIEW

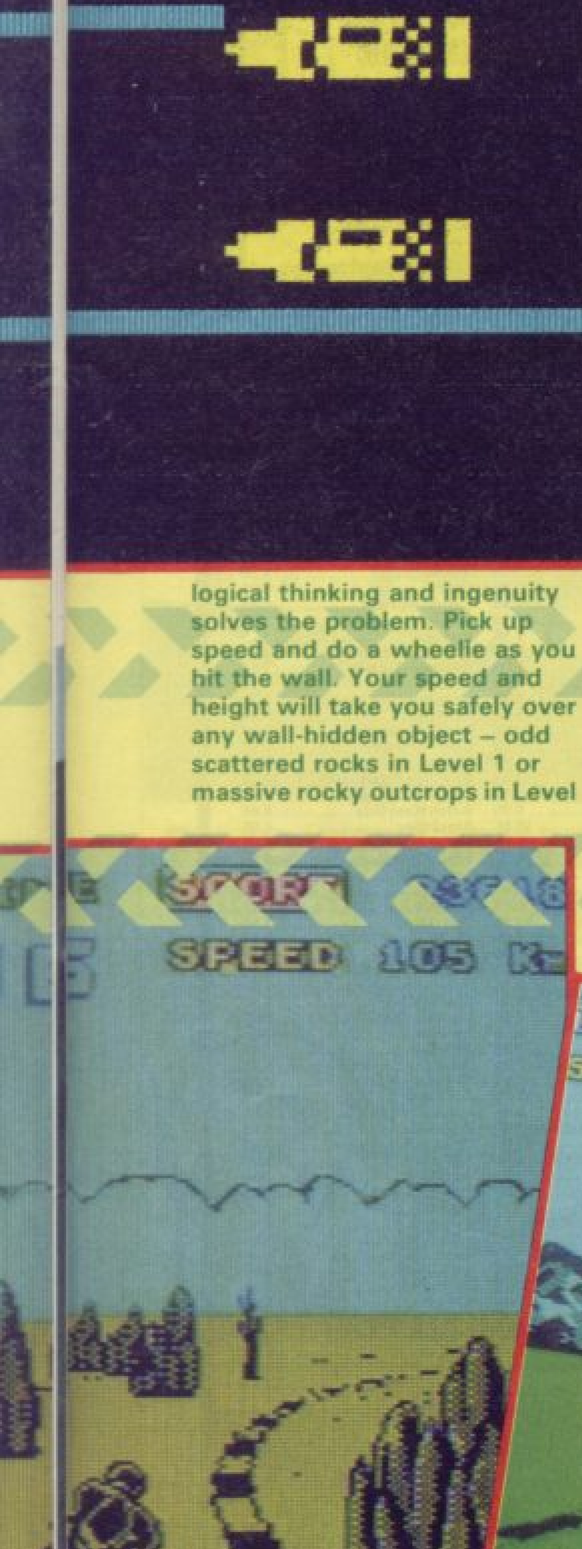


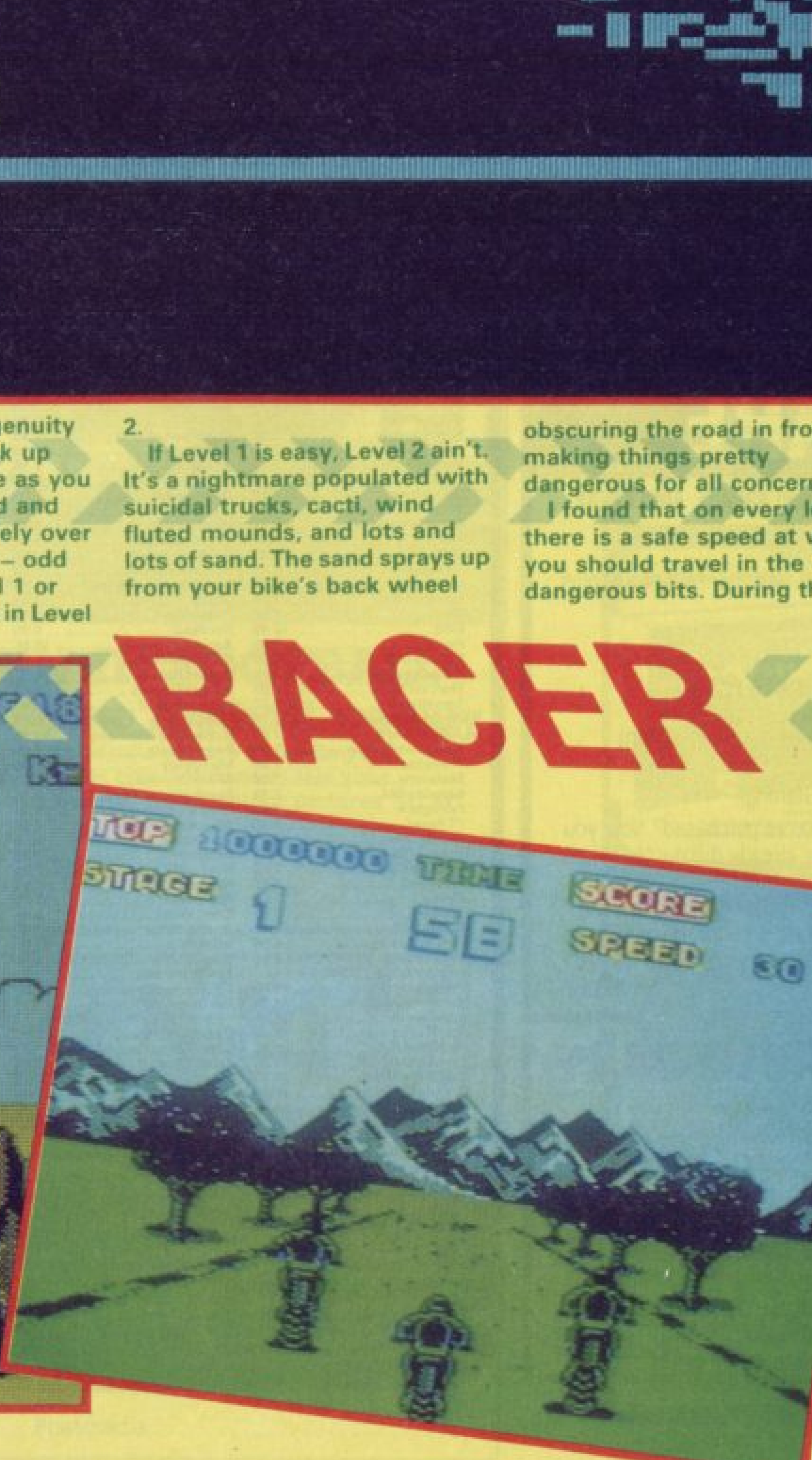
logical thinking and ingenuity solves the problem. Pick up speed and do a wheelie as you hit the wall. Your speed and height will take you safely over any wall-hidden object – odd scattered rocks in Level 1 or massive rocky outcrops in Level 2.

If Level 1 is easy, Level 2 ain't. It's a nightmare populated with suicidal trucks, cacti, wind fluted mounds, and lots and lots of sand. The sand sprays up from your bike's back wheel obscuring the road in front and making things pretty dangerous for all concerned.

I found that on every level there is a safe speed at which you should travel in the dangerous bits. During the first level, for instance, it's approx 195 km/per hour – which you'll have problems reaching anyway – and just over 100 km/ per hour for the second. If you go much over the second level safe speed the bike veers to the edge of the road.

RACER



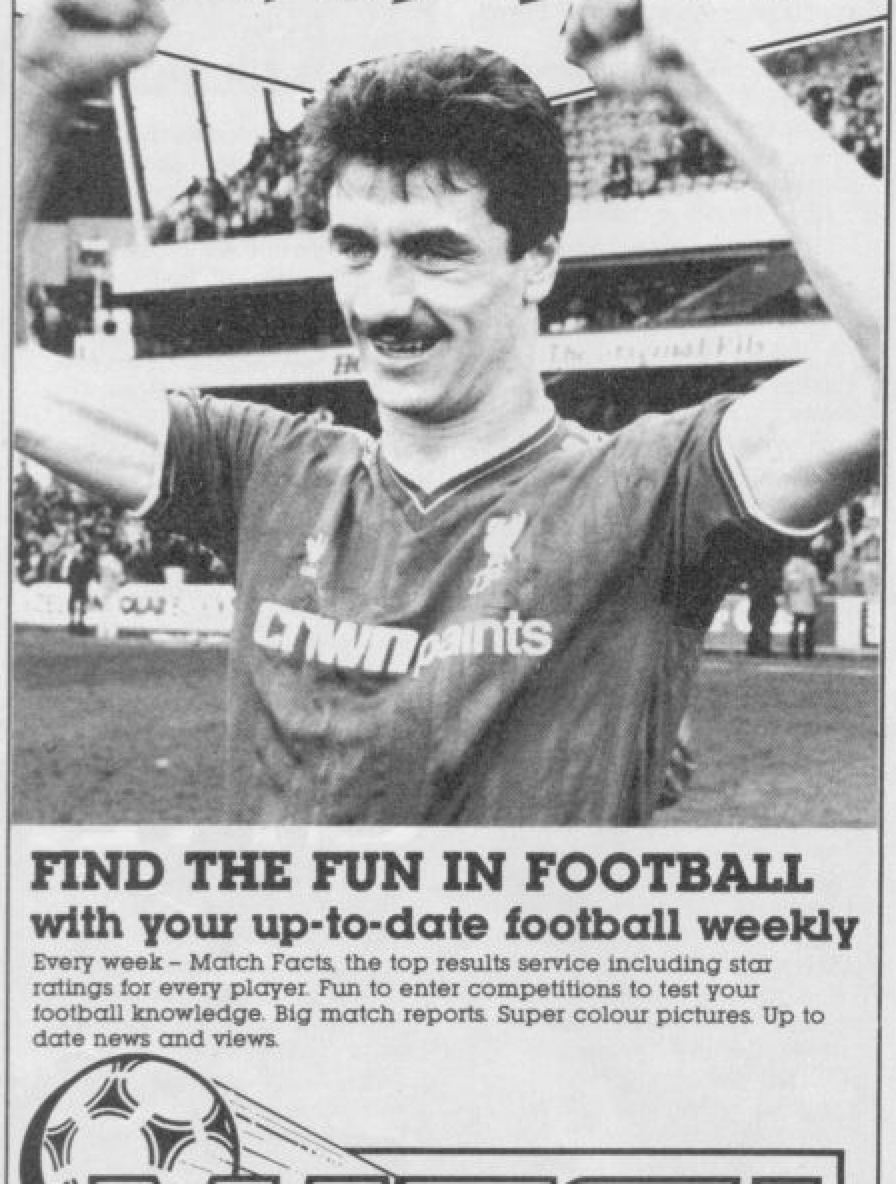


Crashes, designed with great graphics flair by Aliens the design team, Focus, are simple but realistic. The bike bumps, there's a spray of dust and suddenly you see your machine sail up into the air to land in a heap on the road in front of you.

All Enduro Racer's effects, including the sight of your little rider bouncing off the seat of the bike as you jump a wall, are just as spectacular. The bike even moves up hills and down dales, an effect which not even TT Racer has managed to achieve.

If you only buy one coin-op arcade game conversion this year on the current turn out from companies such as Ocean, US Gold, and Elite go for Electric Dreams. Enduro Racer is tops■

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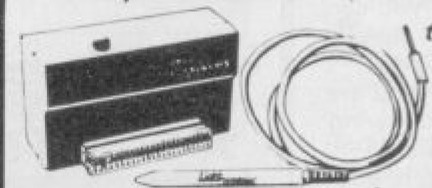
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Games Ace

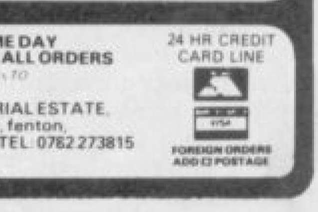


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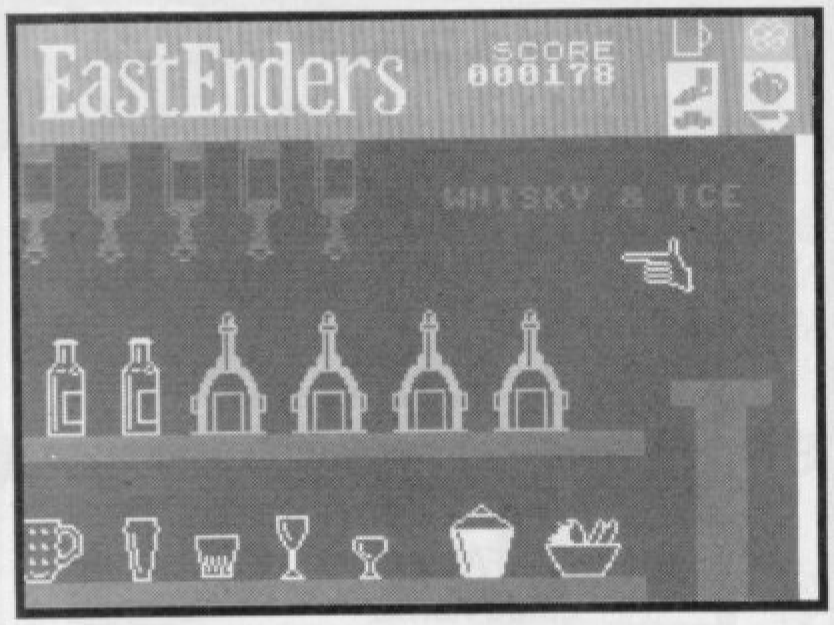
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EASTENDERS

Where do I begin? **EastEnders** is almost too awful for words.

The best way I can express it is that very little you have ever read about, ever, is as bad.

The program has been licenced by Macsen from the BBC and deserves to bomb dreadfully.

I don't think there's a single redeeming feature in the whole package.

Let's take a step-by-step look at what you get for your £9.95.

Right. In the game, if you can call it that, you take the role of a mysterious character who inhabits Albert Square. You are apparently unemployed, owing to the decay of the country under the reign of Thatch, and spend your days helping out the lovable cockneys from Ver Skware.

What we have here is a phenomenally ghastly mish-mash of completely dreadful mini-games. Each of the main locations in the TV show has been transmogrified into a sub-plot. All your favourites are there. You start the game in the middle of the square. Things start to look quite bad even at this early stage. Buildings are represented by large coloured squares and you are rather too big and shown side-on and in one colour.

Once you've walked to a coloured square, you will be presented by a very terrible indoor scene. If you are unlucky enough to end up in the Queen Vic your little man changes into a hand. On the screen are a row of bottles, a row of glasses and a row of pumps and a bar. It's your job to help out Wicksy. Den apparently is busy upstairs trying to administer a stomach-pump to Angie. Anyway, a customer will arrive and will order a drink. You have to get the correct glass, bottle etc and stick in some ice and lemon where necessary.

Next it's off to the Fowler's house where you must either feed or rock the baby depending on it's mood.

The Launderette is a vital stopover. Collect those crazy baskets of washing before they mount up, and do something with them before going on to...

The Allotment! Yus. Arthur has had a mental breakdown and can't attend to his Dhalias. Guide those garden shears all over the place, snipping the weeds before they reach the top of the screen.

Ozcabs doesn't escape either. If you hear a ringing in the background, you must dash to the phone and see who wants a cab. Then you drive around the screen in a plan-view character graphic maze-style routine, pick up the little stick man and take him wherever he wants to go.

Finally there is The Fruit Stall which is the worst of all. You must look after the stall in the market, stocking up on vegetables.

The graphics are simply atrocious. They're littered with attribute problems and poorly defined. The sound is terrible and gameplay is slow and quite pathetic.

Even if you're a big fan of **EastEnders**, don't be stupid enough to buy this. It's a complete dodo■

FACTS BOX

The naffest game release from a 'major' software house for two years. No-one should be allowed to push this on to the shelves

Label: Macsen
Author: in-house
Price: £9.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: none

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★☆☆☆☆

INTO TH

This is the stuff! Pure Alistair Maclean **Where Eagles Dare**-style. The sort of We-want-a-futile-heroic gesture – in-you-go aw don't-come-back mission that makes the blood run cold.

Somebody has to infiltrate the Nazi headquarters, located in an eight-storey castle. That somebody is you, suicidally solo and armed only with a rifle and limited ammo. And of course the place is crawling with stormtroopers.

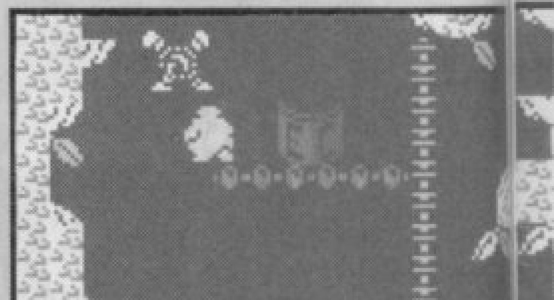
There are three saboteurs to find, held somewhere in the dungeons. You have to liberate the commandant's private collection of antiquities. And, if you can see your way to doing it, the allies wouldn't mind if you blew the base into a billion pieces with a well timed explosion before leaving!

This is the sort of game that you play with a stiff upper lip, a supple joystick wrist and burnt cork all over your face.

Behind the gung-ho heroic plot lies a single-player **Gauntlet**-style program, and one that surprises its medieval inspiration.

For a start, the graphics are bigger. Bigger, yes, but clever planning has all but avoided attribute problems. Quite how they've done it I'm not sure, but it's almost like those notorious clashes don't exist. The scenery's pretty atmospheric as well, with dark corridors, iron doors which require keys, wooden ones which can be shot away, officials at desks. . . You really have a sense of being in the thick of it. There are even toilet cubicles, which you can blast open!

Despite this detail, the



landscape still scrolls. It's not a continuous, smooth scroll – it only moves when you reach the edge of the screen – but the programmers have played fair and, providing you keep your finger on the trigger, you should have time to nix and Nazis as they appear on-screen.

The other main difference from **Gauntlet** is gameplay. While the swords and sorcery epic concentrates on slashing and blasting, there's much more strategy to **Eagle's Nest**. Direct contact with the Hun adds fatal hits at a drastic rate. If you're to survive for any length of time you'll hand around corners and make full use of

GREY

Norman the cat stumbles blindly out of his local pub and into one of the most bizarre arcade adventures ever to cross wires with the Spectrum.

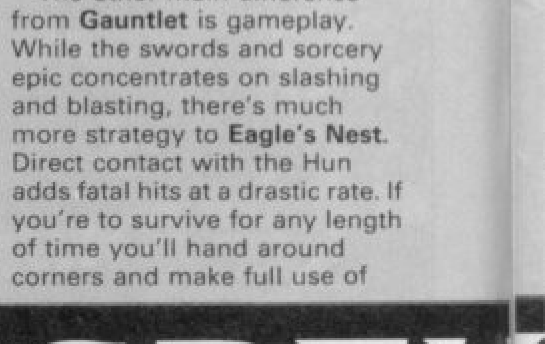
At first the land **Greyfell** resemles the Ultimatesque exteriors of **Knightlore** and **Alien 8**, combined with an icon control system that looks as if it's been lifted from Beyond's **Enigma Force**.

But there the similarities end. The game is a wickedly sarcastic comment on heroic fantasy where 'umble 'eroes battle darkhearted demons.

The nearest you'll get to an 'umble 'ero is Norman. The great wizard Hitormis, tells you of how the land of Greyfell was pluged into darkness when Mauron, the Evil One, stole the precious orb of light. Peace and love have been banished forever from the land. Anyway, that's enough plot. Basically its incomprehensible tosh – and intended to be so. I suppose you ought to know there's an Orb too which needs to be returned to its proper place in the Cup of Sorrows.

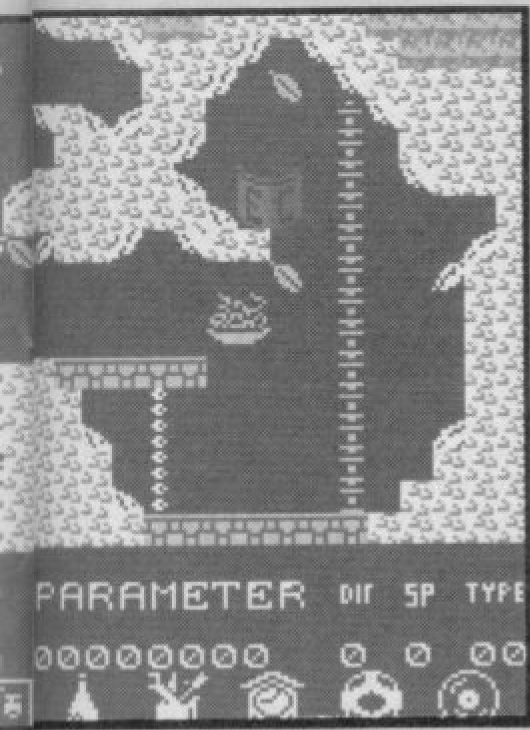
Greyfell is absolutely chock-full of seemingly useless objects some protected by medieval security systems, huts with seemingly useless interiors, and seemingly endless tree clusters.

You'll never walk alone in **Greyfell**. Not for long. There are five goodies and eight types of baddie. A simple artificial



HE EAGLE'S NEST

ARCADE REVIEW



narrow passages, taking pot shots as they charge you.

You'll also need to make a map, because not all rooms are useful, while some routes take you back on yourself, and you won't want to dawdle in these surroundings. It's worth noting where the supplies of food and life-restoring medicine are, as well as the ammo boxes, because few things are more embarrassing than finding yourself surrounded by the Bosh without a bullet to your name.

Like all the best infiltration epics, the secret of success is a clear plan of action. Don't stand around when you don't need to and don't get involved in unnecessary battles.

However many of the enemy you take out, more will always appear. Most importantly, don't wander aimlessly from level to level, because when you return you'll find that all the doors you carefully opened are shut again, making the trek to the stairs even more hazardous.

Finally, salute the touches that mark out the care taken with this program. You can choose between silence, 48K sound or enhanced 128K music and effects.

There's also a *Load Data* option on the opening menu's, so that new adventures can be launched at a later date.

All in all it's quite a pleasant jaunt into occupied territory, Gauntlet-style.

We've not heard much from Interceptor recently, but **Into the Eagle's Nest** is a great way to launch their Pandora label. The action isn't quite so frantic as Gauntlet's, as it's geared to tip-toeing secretly round, but it's fast enough and the strategic elements should give it a longer life.

Accept this mission and buy this game■

HINTS AND TIPS

● Don't waste ammunition. You're limited to 99 rounds at a time and it taken two shots to kill a soldier, so don't blast mindlessly.

● Us your resources carefully. Don't try to collect ammo beyond the 99 rounds limit, and don't collect first aid kits if you're in good health.

● If you waste keys in the early stages, you may find you can't complete the mission.

● Make good use of cover. Shelter behind oil drums rather than blasting them all out of the way, then shoot round them. The Nazis are fairly dumb and will charge into your hail of bullets!

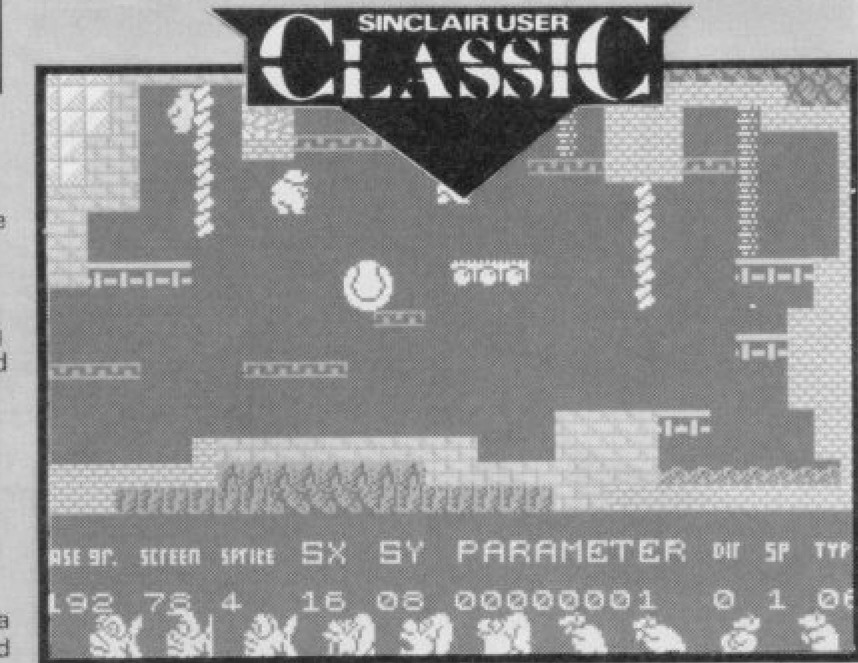
FACTS BOX

A Gauntlet-style game that outdoes the original with great graphics and strategic gameplay. Terrific fun – buy it

INTO THE EAGLES NEST
Label: Pandora
Author: Kevin Parker and Robin Chapman
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: [signature]

★★★★★



FELL



intelligence routine makes the goodies talk through speech bubbles – a technique first used in Imagine's **Movie** – while baddies remain silent, but deadly if they get too close.

Greyfell's characters talk in riddles and spout on about their standard of living and what they need to survive. Offalorien, the shifty spy, for instance, says 'Fruit 4 me'. When you come across a strawberry, perhaps, pick it up and look for shifty. Maybe he'll give you something in exchange to help you with your quest.

You pick up objects, choose *Zap* spells and use them with the icon-control system. It's slightly unwieldy and, when baddies are badgering you, almost impossible to use.

The *Zap* icon is easy to use, you just press *Fire* twice and the current spell wends its way slowly towards the enemy. If your luck holds – and it's the right spell – it'll hit the baddie and destroy it. More than likely, however, the spell will float over its head and it'll get even more angry.

The other icons are more of a pain to use. You have to flip through four of them and press the *Fire* key to pick up an object. That would be OK but if several rats are making you feel as if you're the minced meat in a sandwich you can't do anything but defend yourself and loose energy.

Only the right type of spell will destroy first magnitude monsters – wolves, killer tomatoes and cat-eating, fish-headed plants, but a good fist-clobbering will do for some of the lower life forms among the dark lord's denizens. Just hit the *Fire* button and Norman hits his foe. You will, of course, have to be within striking distance and you'll have to get in one or two good thumps before the baddie's blitzed and all the while you'll be in danger of losing one of your nine lives.

Greyfell is one big trap. You can fall down pot holes into useless dungeon locations. You can step on pressure pads which catapult you into the arms of fish-head plants. Or get pinned between walls which pop out of thin air.

The walls are there to protect some of the more important objects. When you step toward them, over an invisible boundary, they build brick by brick and, unless you've worked out which spell to use you'll just have to give up and go on searching for cup and orb.

Very rarely do two cliches put together make an original game, but **Greyfell** is an exception. And who cares if it's filched bits and pieces from **Enigma Force, Knightlore, Alien 8, Fairlight, Marble Madness** the **Holy Grail**. . .■

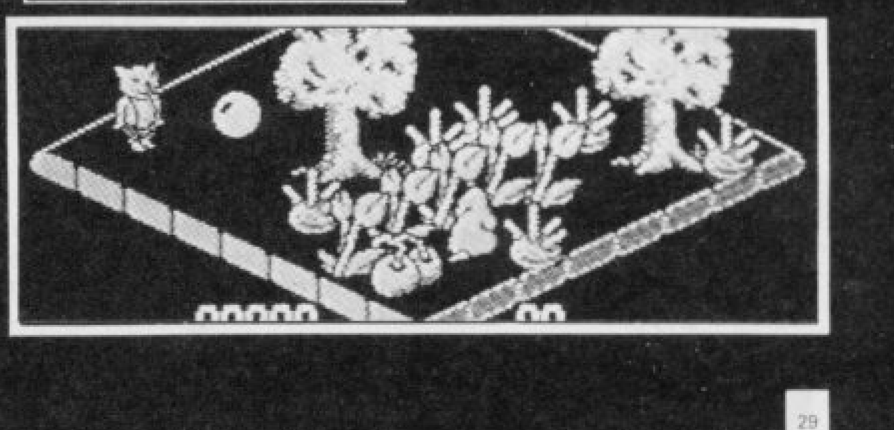
FACTS BOX

Humorous fantasy combined with a strong, heroic quest, set in a Knightlorish world

GREYFELL
Label: Starlight
Price: £9.95
Memory: 48K-128K
Joystick: various

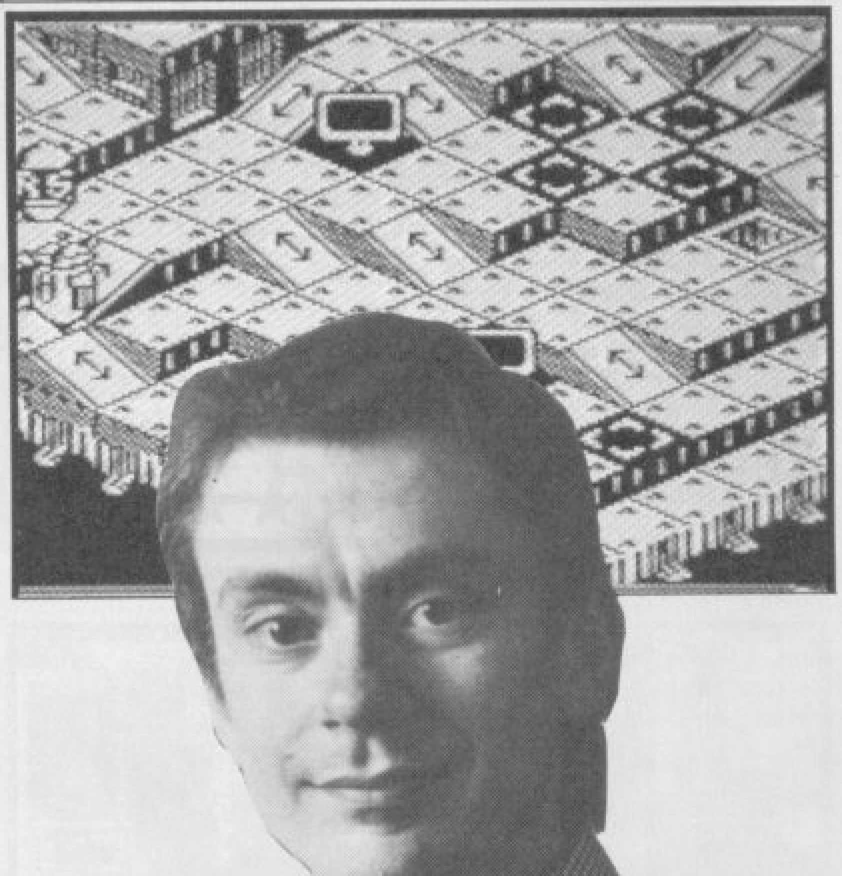
Reviewer: [signature]

★★★★★



C.O.D.E. T.A.L.K.

STEVE Turner is a bit of a legend at Hewson. His list of hits is pretty impressive and includes such gems as Avalon, Quazatron and – his latest – Ranarama. We ask him wots wot



STEVE TURNER AGE 32

The first time I saw a computer I was fifteen. It was about the size of a desk and it had 512 bytes. It was in the school maths department. We had to put reels and reels of paper tape in, to assemble and then run the simplest program – all the output was via a teletext.

I learnt a bit of programing at school and around computer clubs; stuff like Algol 60, Fortran, I learnt assembler and Cobol under a job training scheme in the VAT. I also worked at the customs and excise as a programmer. 'If it breaks fix it' they said. It never broke, I got bored.

I played around with the ZX80 when it came out, I built it OK but the power supply which came with it blew up. I was ready with my first animated ZX80 game when the ZX81 came out. It was not good timing. When the Spectrum came out I decided at last this was the machine for me.

To learn programming I'd go to the library, there are a lot of good books around a couple of names I fan remember are Rodney Zaks Z80 guide and Levanthalls Z80 programming. I still use that.

The first program I ever wrote was something that generated the Fibinucci sequence, that may sound dull but I followed it up with the first program I am still proud of – a dating program. The dating program was a complete success – kids paid money to go on the computer – there were some unlikely combinations. The money I should say went to charity and a good time was had by all.

VITAL DETAILS

Which other programmers do you admire?
Jeff Minter for his sheer individuality, I used to admire the Ultimate team for being consistantly good
What are your favourite programs?
Atic Atac, Ancipital (on C64) and Starglider on the ST. Basically I'm a big shoot em up fan
What arcade game do you get the highest scores on?
I do alright on Star Wars – most things that require instant response rather than thought
What program would you most like to have written?
Elite, I always wanted to do a vector game but I thought the Spectrum couldn't handle it – it can, but the maths get horrendous
Greatest programming achievement?
I've just made it – I've found a way to program a Centronics printer interface to be an interface between computers – you can get IBM compatibles to talk to a Spectrum using parallel transmission – to print out text files for example



Ranarama in action

Programming Ambition
I'd like to do an interactive film – something with the speed and excitement of an adventure movie – it would need speech as well.
Favourite TV program
Horizon – I like programs that stretch the mind otherwise I don't watch TV
Favourite Film(s)
Close Encounters of the Third Kind and Star Wars. Both of those films seemed to change the world for a while after you'd seen them.
Favourite Records
Led Zep IV, Rush: Signals
Favourite Books
Lord of the Rings, Worlds in Collision by Immanual Velikosky and the Lensman series by Doc Smith
Worst program that also did well
Commodore Commando (dire) Valhalla from Legend (I never liked it)



World Cup – not a favourite

World Cup Carnival (need I say more)

Hobbies
The main one is music I've got guitars and some synthesisers at home
Worst subject at school
French
Best thing about the Spectrum
It manages to fool you into having a high res screen without using a big amount of memory
Worst thing about the Spectrum
Lack of any support chips whatsoever
SOFTOGRAPHY: 3D Space Wars (Hewson, 1983) 3D seidab Attack (Hewson, 1983) Lunattack (Hewson, 1984) Avalon (Hewson, 1984) Dragontorc (Hewson, 1984) Quazatron (Hewson, 1986) Ranarama (Hewson, 1987)

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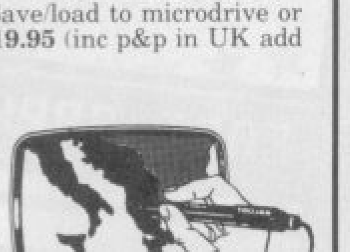


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SHADOW SKIM

Jaws dropped when **Shadow Skimmer** came into the office. Leads were checked, heads were shaken, could it really be on a Spectrum?

It was. **Shadow Skimmer** is the smoothest scrolling most attribute-clash free game you've ever seen.

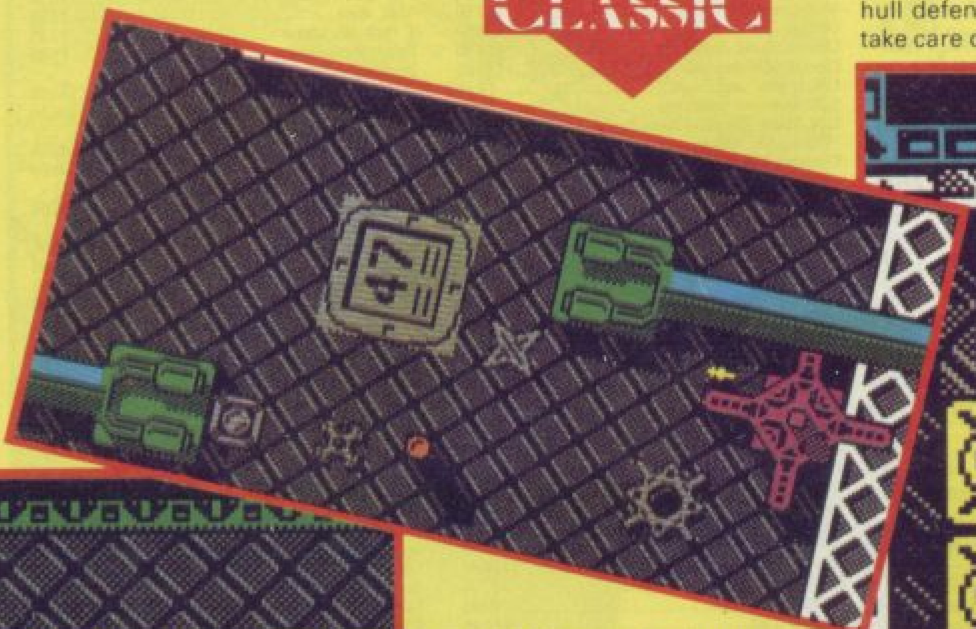
It takes a sizable leap beyond Lightforce's previous achievements in this area. It looks, if you want a point of reference, a little like **Uridium** did on the Commodore but is maybe even more detailed.

The game play itself is a little like **Uridium** too, in that it combines frenzied shooting with not bumping into things. It is also set on the surface of a giant space ship.

There is, however, a good deal more to the game than any of this might suggest.

The plot is this. There you were, dossing it on a Grade A interstellar liner when it's your turn to check the outer hull in your space skimmer. No problem, all those ultra efficient hull defence systems should take care of alien interlopers but

SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC







SHOCKWAY R

Shockway Rider is the latest release from Faster Than Light, who brought us **Lightforce**. It looks like a brilliant conversion from some coin-op game, so ingenious is the gameplay, but I can find no precedent, it seems Faster Than Light has done the impossible and invented a really new game idea.

Shockway Rider is cheerfully violent, very gory, and utterly maddening. It's all about racing against time through city streets of the future. It features brutality towards innocent bystanders and roving gangs of thugs, there is decapitation, and the throwing of bricks and other offensive material. As you can imagine the game is a winner. The way your central character (a sort of futuristic teddy boy) calmly barges helpless pedestrians remains amusing even after the umpteenth time.

The layout is this: across the screen run three walking tracks, like the different lanes in a motorway they travel at different speeds. Each is filled with assorted pedestrians and other obstacles, chiefly police road barriers which decapitate the unwary. Ruthless but effective.

You get three minutes to complete a game area, in order to do it in that time you will have to travel in the fastest track as often as possible, in fact, you will have to continuously dodge between tracks leaping from one to the other to avoid barriers and barging everybody else out of the way. This is what makes the game, time and time again you crash into barriers because you just didn't quite remember in time to change tracks...

If all this wasn't enough to worry about every so often a gang – they have charming names like the Blockboys and the Krazies – leaps out to attack you or a police riot scoop appears to punish wrong doers.

It isn't just highly original and utterly infectious, its also funny. Faster than Light, in its previous guise as Gargoyle was noted for never taking itself entirely seriously. Same here, you are a



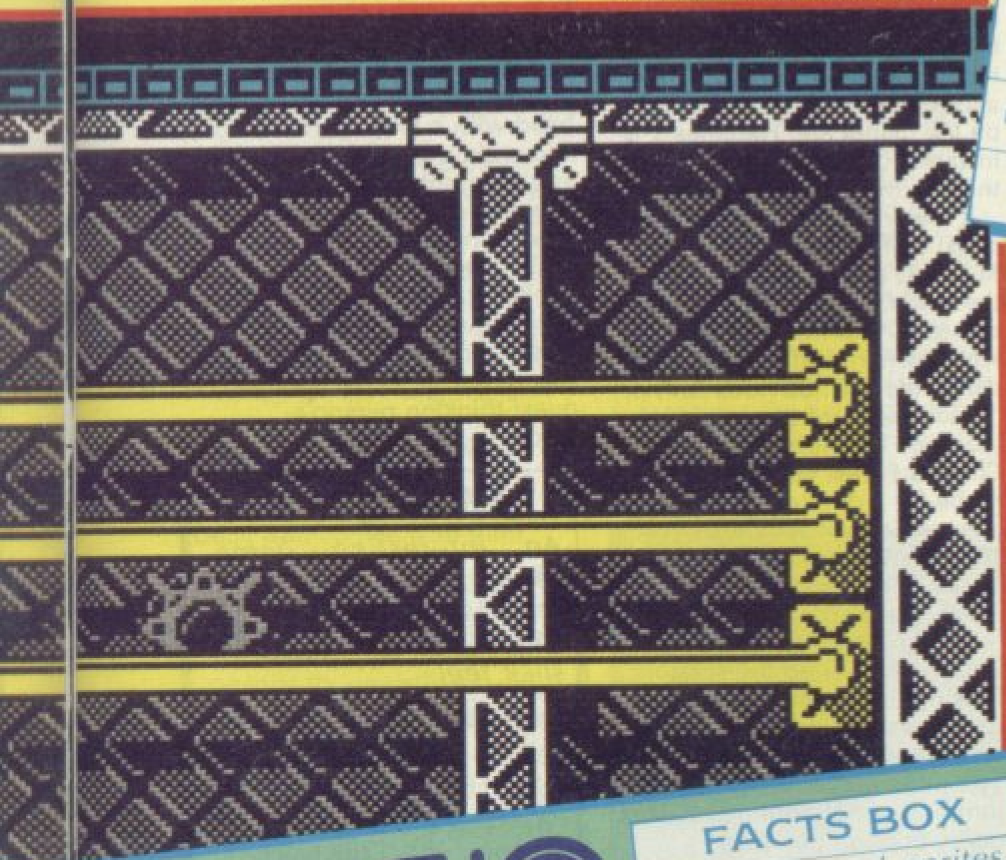
MMER

guess what? Things go horribly wrong and you get trapped out there amidst a trillion different defence mechanisms in a landscape of almost box-like enclosed spaces. It isn't easy to manoeuvre let alone survive. Somehow you have to get past all the ship defences and make it to the one route back to the safety of the ship.

Problems come in various guises, obviously there is a strong chance of being blown away by assorted ship laser defence mechanisms, there is also another problem – finding your way around, often a section of hull seems impassable and back and forth you go crunching into bulkheads. Part of the trick is to make use of a nifty facility which enables you to flip your ship (a hip hop phrase if ever I heard one). Flipped, for structural reasons that elude me, your ship can pass under some of the obstacles in its path. There is a problem though, upside down your ship is not nearly so capable of defending itself.

In some cases one route through the ship is to enter the cargo holds and find another exit. The sequence where the cargo doors open and close around your ship is, simply, breathtaking. I don't know why exactly such a small thing should seem so wonderful but it's so smoothly and elegantly done its almost my favourite feature.

Over all the scrolling, is as smooth as caramel, the spaceships are some of the most creative I have seen, and you couldn't ask for more speed. **Shadow Skimmer** scores all the way■



FACTS BOX

The smoothest scrolling attribute-clash free game you've ever seen. Maybe more detailed than Hewson's Uridium

SHADOW SKIMMER
Label: The Edge
Author:
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★★

ARCADE ★ REVIEW

RIDER



FACTS BOX

Large animated sprites, lots of fun and as original a game idea as you'll find anywhere. Its marvellous, number one

SHOCKWAY RIDER
Label: Faster Than Light
Author: In house
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★★

SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC

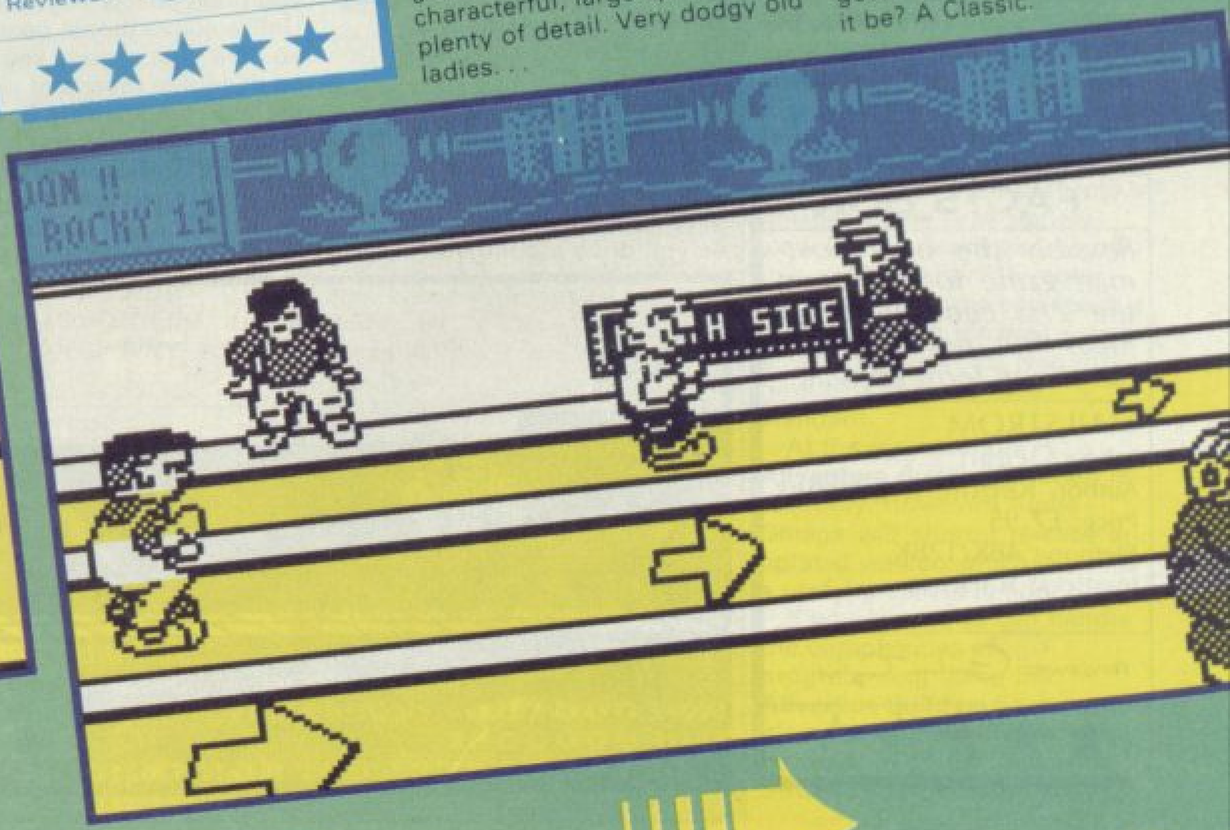


somewhat incongruous looking greaser, slicked back hair an' all. The other bystanders and the gang are all similarly characterful, large sprites with plenty of detail. Very dodgy old ladies. . .

As you would expect, the programming generally is excellent; movement, despite the large sprites, is smooth and the animation equally excellent, check out the sequence when you knuckle someone – just like Southend seafront on a bank holiday.

The background is fairly plain but there are occasional passing billboards with the odd good joke on them and signposts that tell you how far around the current city block you have got.

Shockway Rider is simply marvellous, combining an original idea, with excellent programming and a touch of good humour. What else could it be? A Classic.



ARCADE REVIEW

KAT TRAP

Names. Funny, aren't they? We'd be lost without them, but thinking up good ones is sooo difficult. Look at Domark's situation. Having developed a birrova 'rep' for being inconsistent (wholly unjustified, you understand) they decided to get 'with it'.

And so Streetwise is born. A new label 'that puts forward programmers for the recognition they deserve', has probably the least trendy logo imaginable and pretends – unsuccessfully – to be completely unconnected to Dom-Dom and his mate.

One of their first releases is **Kat-Trap,** designed by the winner of a competition in *Crash* magazine and programmed by that zany bunch of funsters at Design Design.

So, if it was a bit of a surprise then to find the game's got the most useless storyline in the world.: Everyone on earth gets sunburned (owing to solar explosions) and leaves the planet unattended while they go on holiday or something. When they get back, the whole place has been invaded by cats.

The evicted humans, being far too simple to breed some Dobermans and send them down instead, decided to do battle with the cats with two hardy space-warriors, M.T.-E.D. and Hercules 1. The lads land on the planet and Hercules 1 is instantly captured (it would the one that's easy to type).

It materialies (What does? It does) that you must control M.T.-E.T. and guide it around the world, searching for its lost comrade, and the enemy base which, when destroyed will defeat the cats. Obvious isn't it?

Each sector of the game is labelled: The Ruined City, The Charred Forest etc and each is home for a different breed of enemy. Each of which is susecptible to a certain form of attack – Flames don't fancy water, that sort of thing.

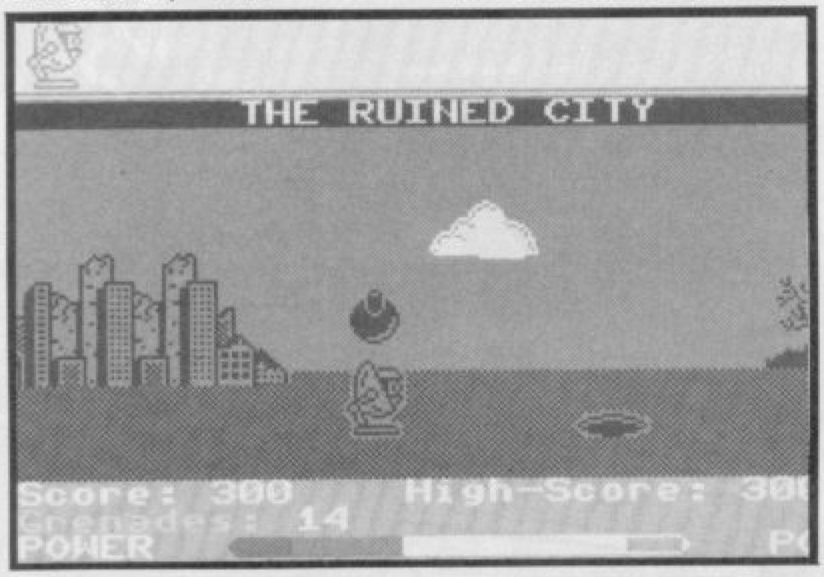
The graphics are cutesy and you move around the screen looking like a pudding-basin with eyes and odd legs. The animation is very smooth, as you glide about, ducking and jumping and shooting cats who, oddly enough go "pow" (instead of 'meow', I s'pose).

At the bottom of the left/right scrolling screen – well it doesn't scroll, infact. It sort of flicks, but it changes before you get to the end of the screen, so it looks a bit scrolly – is a power guage which indicates how much power you have left. Yes, really.

M.T.-E.D. (apparently it means Multi Terrain Exploration Droid) is equipped with front-firing guns and a grenade launcher. Grenades can be collected by eagle-eyed players who spot the big crate with 'Grenades' on the side.

A peculiar thing is the way in which you die. Whenever you are hit by anything hostile, M.T.-E.D. will be hurled forward in a most silly fashion. Even if you were facing right and a cat in front of you shot you in the head with a laser right – yes, I know it's a stupid concept – you'll fly right for a couple of screens, and skitter along on your bonce. Very odd.

Kat-Trap is certainly a high-quality product. The code has many inventive twiddles and it is quite interesting to play. But, essentially, it is just another quasi-thinking person's-scrolling-shoot-out■



FACTS BOX

An interesting game. More mainstream than most of Domark's stuff to date, and with a very slick feel

KAT-TRAP
Label: Streetwise
Price: £8.95
Joystick: various
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Jerry Muir

★★★★☆

MAILSTROM

Well I sort of like this. It reminds me vaguely of Postman Pat the kids all-action progam about the adventures of a postman. He has a red van. Its very nice.

Anyway **Mailstrom,** a postman game set towards the dawn of the 21st century where, curiously, Michael Nasty drives Skit (are bells ringing?) a bright red van, determined to get the post through at any cost in a post nuclear world of anarchy and destruction. This is an unusual plot for an arcade game.

The story goes like this: collect letters from the sorting office, a series of lights then indicates which houses must have a letter delivered to them. As you drive around you will pass post boxes from which you must collect bags of mail. Unlike conventional postmen you feel that a mere key is not an adequate means of opening the box, the answer? Bombs.

The mixture of letter delivery, letter collection, avoiding muggers and exploding post boxes forms the sum total of the game. Though it has various icon controls there really isn't very much to it. The conflict in the game resides merely in trying to meet the sack collecting required set each day. Complex it isn't.

The graphics are pretty good, although technically the game doesn't really pose many problems. The van moves slowly (well the street scrolls behind it) and sometimes Michael has to get out to blow up a post box but the areas of movement are carefully controlled so there is little colour clash. The van is red (a surprise that) the backgrounds are a sort of shaded black and white – quite effective actually – very post apocalypse film noir.

As a game, well I enjoyed it a suprising amount, chugging around in my little van delivering the mail but then I awlays was a bit simple. I don't think it will retain a long term appeal. I'd give it a life of only a couple of weeks. Still, in its own terms a successful little game.

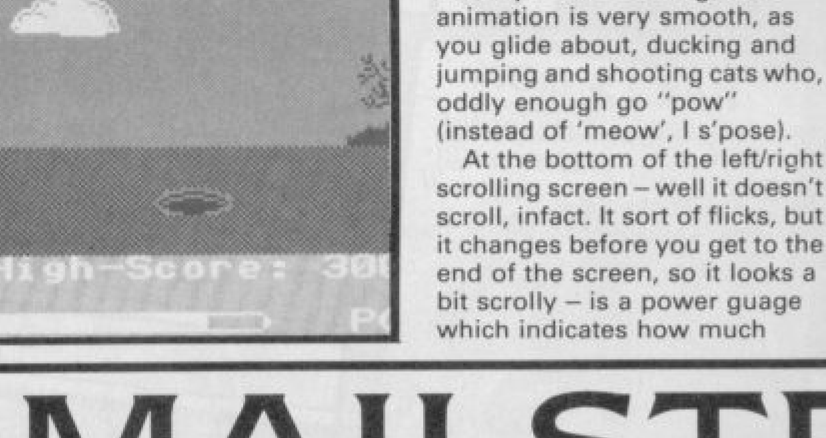
FACTS BOX

Possibly the only postman game to be set in the 21st century clever ideas but not likely to have long term appeal.

MAILSTROM
Label: Ocean
Author: Reptile Industries
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: Various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★☆☆



ADVENTURE BUILDING SYSTEM

It's now almost four years since Gilsoft sprung **The Quill**, the first ever adventure writer on an unsespecting world.

Despite its age, this utility was without serious challenge until last year – when Incentive launched its **Graphic Adventure Creator**.

Although these packages require upwards of £16.95 for the creation of graphical adventures, no system had made a bid for the budget building adventure builders.

Until now, that is.

With the release – by Alpha-Omega – of a system to build graphical adventures for a mere £7.45.

While it *is* patently unfair to compare this with other packages at more than twice the price, I will – nonetheless – do exactly that. You see, there's nothing else to compare the **Adventure Building System** with.

Unlike both **GAC** and the **Quill**, **ABS** comes with Ram *Save/Load* as standard (though it calls them *Save/Load* to Bank) as well as the same to tape.

Like **Quill**, Alpha/Omega's utility truncates words. However, it also offers an option to select how many letters (from three to seven) words are to be truncated to.

In the screen presentation stakes it has **GAC** licked by offering a choice of three routines – including one intelligent' scrolling routine.

ABS provides 100 flags as standard (and more can be added if required), but **GAC**-like subroutines are needed for timing sequences as no flags are up-dated – as **Quill** flags 0-11 are.

The parser (the bit which tries to make sense out of player's input) is a little limited – much like that of the **Quill**. **ABS** cannot understand adverbs (*Carefully* examine chair), adjectives (drop the *green* key) or multiple inputs (get the axe *then* chop the logs) – though careful programming will allow the word *It* to be recognised (a point not mentioned in the manual). Similar programming can allow the addition of directions other than *Up, Down, North, South, East* and *West*, a message such as 'Are you sure you want to *Quit?*' and alternative character sets.

But here's the rub. An extensive knowledge of Basic is needed to produce decent adventures with **ABS**. The program is *extremely* complex in operation and is not helped by some odd idiosyncrasies in the manual. For some reason, the sequence of entry of data on-screen and the order of help (and descriptions of *what* to enter) in the manual differ in several places.

Other than this, the manual is useful, providing several step-by-step examples as well as helpful advice on writing your own conditions (as Basic subroutines). The manual also goes on to provide hints on adding last-minute touches to your game – such as *Beep*ing whenever a key is pressed, or just when an invalid key is pushed.

The program which actually compiles all of your data into a finished game is extremely slow (taking nearly six minutes to compile a short 15-room adventure), but the end result is certainly worth the wait – with an impressively-fast response time almost up to **GAC** standard.

At the moment, the **Adventure Building System** is text-only. However, Alpha-Omega will shortly release an uprated version which includes a useful graphics option.

If you rekon you can handle the complexities of programming using the **Adventue Building System** then it's a terrific buy. But definitely not easy to get to grips with. Strictly, not for beginners■

FACTS BOX

For the technically competent its excellent value for money and could be used to write a passable game

ADVENTURE BUILDING SYSTEM
Label: Alpha-Omega
Author: T D Frost
Price: £4.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: none

Reviewer: Roy Stead

★★★★☆



TOOL-KIT

```
ORG    60000
LOAD   60000
LD     IX,(23563)
LD     E,(IX+4)
LD     D,(IX+12)
LD     C,(IX+20)
LD     B,(IX+28)
LD     A,(IX+36)
PUSH   AF
```

REVIEW

CHARACTERS

Characters by Gilsoft is a character-set designer for use with the **Quill** adventure writing system. Gilsoft describes it as an 'easy to use character and UDG designer' and it is. Gilsoft has gone to great lengths – extremes, even – to ensure that **Characters** is simple to get into. No complications here. No, Sir. Nope.

The display consists of a magnified (sixty-four times actual size) display of the character you are working on beside a life-size representation. The base of the screen is occupied by a large(ish) blank area surmounted by an actual-size depiction of the entire character set (*Space* to the copyright symbol). Only one character set can reside in memory at a time so on side two of the cassette are some pre-designed character fonts which range from gothic, through italic, to a futuristic set (or 'Mos Eisley', as it is known 'in the trade'. Impressive, huh?) in the main they are all well-designed.

Where **Characters** falls down badly is it offers only the bare minimum of facilities. No *Rotate* options. No way to invert your designs. *Mirror?* You must be joking! If it had been released at £1.99, then **Characters** would have been – just about – acceptable due purely to the 22 pre-defined fonts (some of 'em are pretty good).

But £3.99? Those of us with Rainbird's **Art Studio** or Softechnic's **Artist II** already have a far superior designer. The Character program on the **Horizons** tape was better than this.

Even the twenty-two superb fonts supplied fail to justify the price tag.

There are many designers on the market which are both cheaper and more powerful than this■

FACTS BOX

Characters designers are two-a-penny and this one is overpriced for what it does. Nice fonts though

CHARACTERS
Label: Gilsoft
Author: Kevin Madocs
Price: £3.99
Memory: 16K/48K/128K
Joystick: none

Reviewer: Roy Stead

★★☆☆☆



KONAMI'S COIN-OP HITS
FIVE GREAT ARCADE GAMES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE
IT MUST BE CHRISTMAS
HYPER SPORTS
Konami
GREEN BERET
Konami
Yie Ar KUNG-FU
Konami
Mikie
Konami
PING PONG
Konami
KONAMI'S COIN-OP HITS
Cassette Disk
SPECTRUM £9.95 –
COMMODORE £9.95 £14.95
AMSTRAD £9.95 £14.95
Twin Cassette Pack
Imagine
..the name of the game
Imagine Software (1984) Limited, 6 Central Street, Manchester M2 5NS. Telephone: 061-834 3939 Telex: 669977.
Distributed in France by Ocean France. Telephone: 93-42-7144. Distributed in Germany by Rushware. Telephone: 2101-70040.

LETTERS

A wally speaks

I'm game for a laugh at my expense if you publish this letter.

A reader of SU and a Spectrum owner for some three years, I always said I would really get stuck in and do some programming etc. As it is, I rarely get beyond games but do enjoy my games of **Scrabble** against 'Fred'.

I read with interest your *Zap Chat* but don't really understand all the *Peeking* and *Poking* business. I also read with awe about the reader on 140,000+ points for **BeachHead.** So that I can slowly fade away in peace, can anyone help me past the battleship bit as I can't get the range of the carrier or the other ships. So. . .and here's the laugh. . .I've yet to see the fortress!

There's more! Only my daughter-in-law has ever got anyone over the road in **Yomp** and then not beyond the minefield!

I am tempted to buy **BeachHead 2** but what's the use if I can't beat the original?

So really this is a cry from the heart. Never mind the up and coming whizz kids (140,000, indeed). . . what about the ten year olds and the old 'uns struggling to learn the game? Perhaps you should run a 'wallys corner'?

I just wonder how many of your readers are in my over-65 age bracket. Any idea? I think we should be encouraged so that maybe, one day, I will write a modest program . . . how about running one. . . just for us?

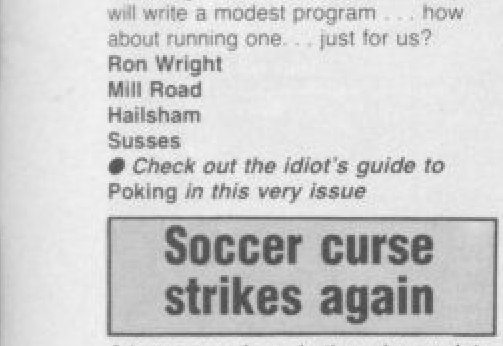
Ron Wright
Mill Road
Hailsham
Susses

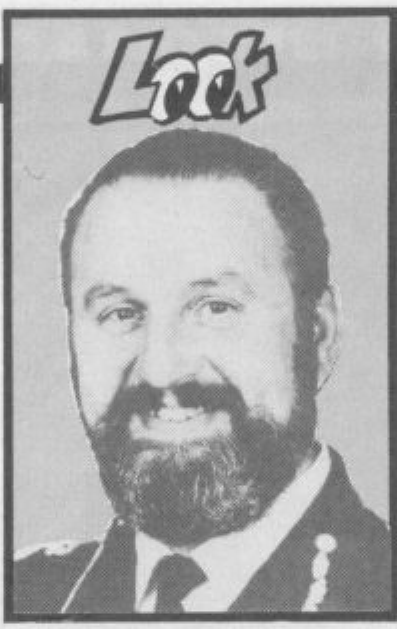
● *Check out the idiot's guide to* **Poking** *in this very issue*

Soccer curse strikes again

I have never been bothered enough to write to you before, but I feel I must complain about Imagine's **Super Soccer.** It is full of serious bugs. In a two-player game, if you foul somebody the player stays down, and hence you are stuck. The colour clashes are awful and it seems to me as if it was rushed out before Christmas. I know that no program can ever be error-free but you cannot even finish a two-player game. I feel that if Imagine are to keep their good name, they shouldn't fall into the US Gold **World Cup Carnival** fiasco, trap and rush release products. Keep up the good work SU, I enjoy your mag.

Brian Steptoe
Northholt
Middlesex





▲ One religious loony to another

Bogus goose

I would like to apologise to all of you people at SU for that bogus letter I sent you in the February issue complaining about obcene language.

You know, the one sent in by the completely fictional Gilbert Lenson. If it's any compensation, I've sent in a stream of letters and started a new organisation called The Goose Society entirely devoted to everyone at SU (except Jon Riglar for obvious reasons).

To prove the 'Gilbert Lenson' letter was sent by me, if you compare the awful handwriting on both the letters, you will see that they are the same.

Yours in sorrow

Robert Lenson

PS I don't know why I buy your mag, my Spectrum's bust

PPS Shave Jon Riglar's head and send him to a monastery

● ***Wot a lousy fibber! Gilbert Lenson isn't completely fictional – the Lenson bit's completely real. If you're going to do that sort of thing again try going the whole way and changing both names***

Binomial gibberish

For Christmas I received the new 128K+2. Brilliant, I thought. Proper keys! Built-in tape deck! Wonderful music! The amazing silicon disc! The *huge* 128K memory! Wait a minute, did I say huge memory? Yes, you've guessed it: either the biggest rip-off since Coca-Cola put 'with real vegetable extracts' on its can or the incomprehensible Chapter 24 has claimned another victim.

Confused? So am I. You see, I've got this thing about filing programs (in fact any programs which drains the memory and takes ages to load) and I hoped to expand them with the new vast memory but could only get 32K out of the machine (by using *Dim a*$(1000,32)) but this is in fact as much as I could get out of the ol'Spectrum. (Chapter 24 mentions paging the memory but could you please tell me, in non-binominal gibberish, what is wrong before I need a psychiatrist.)

Ian Gadd
Worcestershire

● *You're right(ish). You can't have an array bigger than 32K, but you can have more than one array! Set up another one in the* **Ram disc** *and load/Save (using the special commands see Chapter 20) the data into your program as necessary.*

Obvious

Can you and the other magazines get your act together. Your reviews are almost totally different. If one gives a Classic, and the other gives a rating of 14%. Who do I go by? Come on don't do this to me. Why, oh why, does every body knock the Plus 2? I think Amstrad have done a great job on it, the play makes sound and music programming so easy.

And who cares about a tape counter. Only pirates who put programs on C90s. The normal programmer doesn't need one.

Tim Lawton
West Sussex

● *I guess you'll go on reading the magazine that gets it right. How about a subscription to SU? You know it makes sense.*

How to get started programming

I got a 128K+2 for Christmas. Please could you suggest some books to help me get started with Basic programming.

J Wroe
Alt Estate
Oswestry

● *Any beginner's guide to Sinclair Basic programming will do but try the Dorling Kindersley* **Step by Step Programming** *books. Remember you can't use single key-word entry on the 128K machines. DK is at 9 Henrietta Street, London WC2. Tel 01-240 5151*

Absolutely millions and zillions

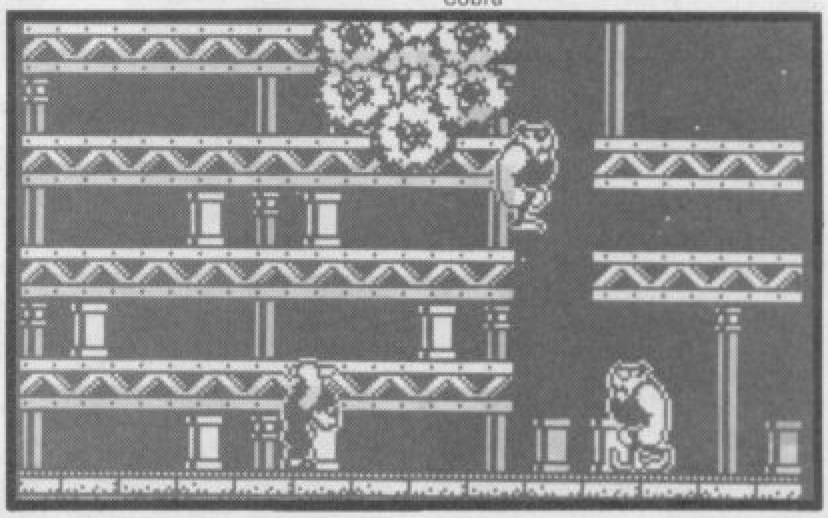
How much does a company like Ocean spend on a licensing deal, say one like **Cobra?** Does it run into thousands, millions, billions?!

Anyway it seems that most of these tie-in gams are of low quality and most software houses think the only way to sell a game is to base it on whatever's big in the box office. And their probably right too but it's not good for games.

Robert Lenson
Kilburn Priory
London NW6



▲ Ocean's AmEx card's handy for Cobra



Empires play-by-mail offer

Having only recently begun to take your slendiferous magazine I wanted to get in contact with anyone who has the game **Empires** from Imperial.

You need six people to play the military/minimg/conquer-the-galaxy computer controlled board game and I'm having trouble putting a team together!

In desperation I turn to your readers in the hope of forming a postal campaign.

A stamped addressed envelope to my address will suffice.

G F Crane
29 Fountains Close
Popley 4
Basingstoke
Hants

LETTERS

Just one big Hoolahoop

I am writing to complain about Jim Douglas' comments in your review column in January's issue of SU.

"War games are still astoundingly popular". You imply that it is a passing fad like skateboards and hula-hoops. War gaming has been practised for centuries and it has a minor spin-off called Chess (You may have heard of it). ". . .mutilation and destruction of other human beings."

Nearly every arcade game that your mag reviews and trumpets about involves gratuitous violence, **Green Beret, Rambo, Commando** *et al.* Just slit the opponent open with your combat knife, anyone gets in your way give 'em a squirt with your trusty flame thrower. What of the other games that involve terminating aliens, ghosts and anything that moves.

"Not being the sort of magazine to take a political stance. . ." Crap! You sound like a CND supporter.

I enjoy war gaming and all things military, but I am not a raving psychopath. I enjoy war games because the challenge is in out-thinking the opponent. Using my brain to device tactics that will hopefully give me an advantage.

The death and the maiming is more abstract than say **Commando** which could just as easily have been named **Soweto** or **Londonderry '86.**

So, don't knock war games please. Each to his own.

David Eltringham
Stockton
Cleveland

● Jim replies: Oh, come on! I'm sure there are a good many people who are just as interested as hula hoops and skateboards as you are in twenty-sided dice and little lead men.

Despite this, we've written a special wargaming and role playing game feature (pages 76 and 77) just for you. Hope you like it. . .

What do you mean you don't believe us? Oh alright then.

Sorry to sound like a CND supporter. I promise to interject some right-wing comments next month. We aim to please at SU



▲ Jim and his mate will be calling round to see ya...



▲ Police containing irate Dixon's customers late last week

Brilliant . . .

I read, with interest, the letter in the January SU regarding the service given by 'Dixons'.

When my new 128K+2 developed an intermittent sound fault I was more than a bit apprehensive about returning it to the suppliers, the Aberdeen branch of Dixons.

A telephone call to the store confirmed that they were prepared to replace the unit rather than accept it for repair. I duly presented the offending month-old 128K+2 and was given a brand new unopened replacement.

On getting home and setting up the machine I was much dismayed to find that none of my Microdrive cartridges would load. I packed up the 128K+2 and returned to Dixons. The manager apologised profusely and I was given another, brand new, unopened 128K+2 in place.

Spectrum 128K+2 number 3 was connected up and again the Microdrive cartridges would not load. I packed it all up, including interface 1, Microdrive and cartridges and returned to Dixons.

The head computer salesman was summoned and I explained the problem to him. Three new 128K+2's were produced, Interface 1 connected and each refused to load the cartridge. (Test on an old style 128 proved Interface and Microdrive were operating correctly.)

It was eventually decided that the current batch of +2's were faulty and a previous stock model was taken from a display cabinet. This machine loaded from Microdrive beautifully. I returned home with 128K+2 number 4.

At home with the computer connected up I found that there was an infuriating fault in that if the keyboard was left untouched for exactly 30 seconds it locked and any further input was impossible. I telephoned Dixons who were still very sympathetic and asked if I could return the computer. They undertook to search out another of their original stock prior to my arrival.

On returning to the store with the 128K+2, interface and Microdrives the head computer salesman had located three of their original stock. The computer which had been on window display loaded from Microdrive, didn't lock and has been operating perfectly (touch wood) since I brought it home.

I have nothing but the highest of praise for the staff at the Aberdeen (St Nicholas Centre) branch of Dixons and think that their patience, understanding and helpfulness in this matter was of the highest standard.

Keith Pirie
Aberdeen

. . . or very dissatisfied . . .

I was interested to hear about Robert Lenson's experiences with Dixons. I was not even slightly surprised.

Having worked for Verran Micro Maintenance, the company which undertakes warranty repairs on Sinclair computers, last year, I can explain what probably happened: Dixons store staff appear to be unable to distinguish between what is a Sinclair product and what is packaged and sold with a Sinclair product by Dixons, ie, anything vaguely Spectrum related taken back to Dixons is quite likely to be sent to the wrong company for repair/replacement under guarantee.

While I worked for Verran last year, I dealt with a very large number of products sent in error – returning them to whoever sent them with an explanation and advising them to send it to the manufacturers for repair. This made no difference – sometimes, exactly the same item was sent straight back again (maybe they thought we would end up repairing it just to stop the hassle?)

Unfortunately, Dixons was not the only company guilty of making silly mistakes which inconvenienced their customers: *All* the high street computer retailers I know of did it at least occasionally while I worked for Verran. Even more unfortunately, customers assume that it is the repair company at fault when their faulty equipment dissapears for ages, which is simply untrue. Equipment often lies around gathering dust in stockrooms for weeks before actually being sent for repair. The list of complaints regarding chain stores is endless – Dixons are not that much more dreadful than any of the others. Not that much – just a bit.

Coming round at last to my personal experiences of Dixons. . .

I went into my local branch (Camberley) on August 12 last year to buy a QL. In the window display, the package consisted of the QL, a printer, and a set of books. I got the QL and the printer, but. . .

– What books? Oh. THOSE books. We're out of stock. Come in next week with your receipt and collect them.
(Next week)
– Books? Oh THOSE books.
(Week after that)
– No sorry. We should be getting some
(Phoned branch manager)

Martin Reilly
Frimley
Surrey

. . . by service at Dixons

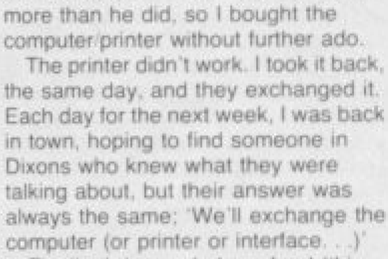
I too, have recently had problems with Dixons. I bought a 128, and asked the assistant about compatability with the 48K games. His immediate reaction was 'Good Heavens, no! It won't work at all.' I deduced that I knew more than he did, so I bought the computer/printer without further ado.

The printer didn't work. I took it back, the same day, and they exchanged it. Each day for the next week, I was back in town, hoping to find someone in Dixons who knew what they were talking about, but their answer was always the same; 'We'll exchange the computer (or printer or interface. . .)'

Finally, I demanded a refund (this decision was helped by the knowledge that Amstrad were introducing a new Spectrum!)

I wasn't their only dissatisfied customer, either, during that week I encountered many raised voices. . .

J Giorgetti
Huddersfield



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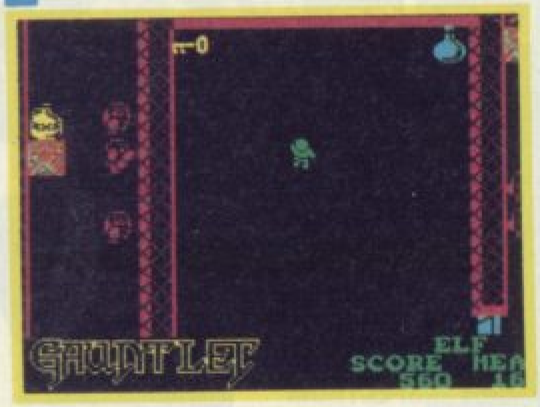
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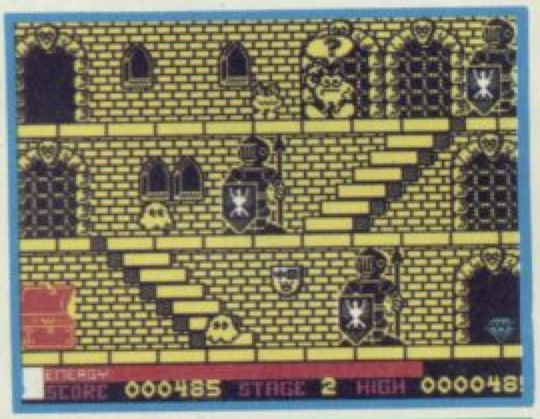
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▲In the top slot: Gauntlet Feb Tip for the Top



▲April tip for the top: Gauntlet

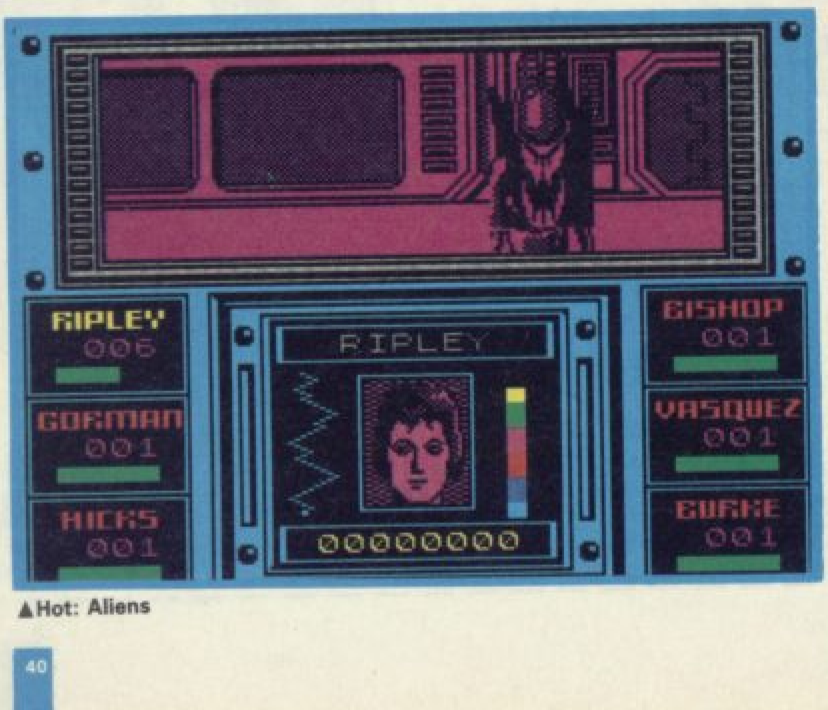


▲Longest on the chart: Olli and Lisa

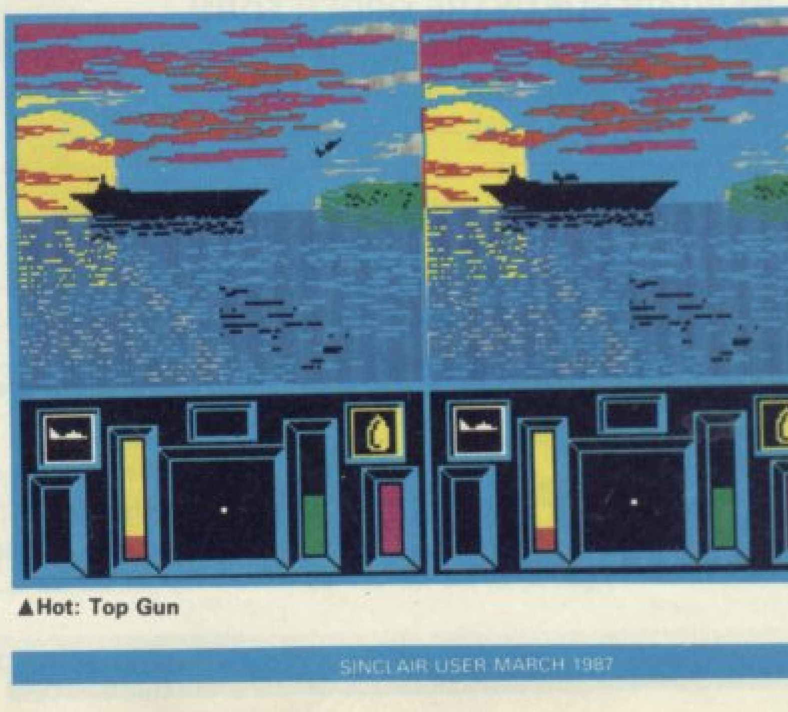
HOTTEST CLIMBERS

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Aliens from Electric Dreams is just one of two very hot film tie-ins right now. It's from the yukky horror movie of course and Electric Dreams has done a good strategy/



▲Hot: Aliens

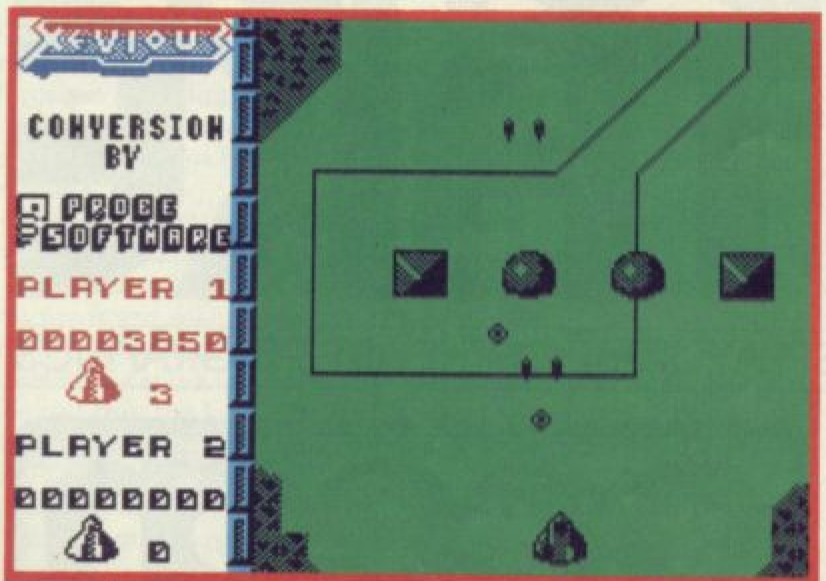

▲Hot: Top Gun

★E★N★T★Y

Compiled by Gallup for *Sinclair User*

As good a conversion of the classic arcade original as could have been wished for. No-one should be disappointed.	★★★★★
A graphically good but dull pot-boiler with cute characters. Predictable but well executed.	★★★★☆
Nice try, Jimmy, but unless you're prepared to spend time training you'll never make it out of the fourth division	★★★★☆
Fails miserably. Dissappointing, eh, Greavsie? What can I say Saint. They've let themselves down badly	★☆☆☆☆
Excellent conversion from the coin-op. Inevitable hardware restrictions make the game less 'special' but it's still great	★★★★★
The best thing Ocean's done for ages. Highly imaginative plot, gameplay and graphics. Don't miss it	★★★★★
Just what was expected. Not great, but it's pleasant enough. Better than most licencing deals	★★★☆☆
It's THE yuppie board game conversion. Against all odds it's a terrific effort with sound and graphics questions added	★★★★★
An impossible coin-op conversion surprisingly well done – the probelm may be the gameplay. The graphics are terrific	★★★★★
Could have been boring and tedious. Instead it's funny, exciting and impressive. A closet hit	★★★★★
Good value collection of Konami's Imagine titles. Nothing brilliant, nothing really awful either. With Yie Ar Kung Fu and Green Beret	★★★★★
Passable 3D racing game with bikes not cars. Two-player option makes it more fun. On budget it's good	★★★☆☆
Latest in Beau Jolly's ten-packs of back catalogue. Pick up on the ones you missed for under a pound a piece	★★★★☆
A must for all sports simulation fans. If you thrilled to Football Manager then this is for you	★★★★★
Ancient platforms and ladders idea regenerated by some excellent cartoon quality graphics	★★★★☆
Attractive arcade-style game, rather than awesomely detailed, but for an undemanding game it can't be beaten	★★★★★
Four Elite biggies from the past all at once. Includes Commando, Bomb Jack, Frank Bruno's Boxing and Airwolf	★★★★★
Essentially Spy Hunter edge-on. Great fun, easy to start and tough to complete. It's even quite addictive	★★★★☆
Wally meets Skool Daze runny, jumpy, collecty thing. Cheap but has little originality	★★★☆☆
A kick in the teeth for martial arts fans. Flat graphics and flimsy plot. A let down even at budget price	★☆☆☆☆

arcade game. **Top Gun** was perfect material for a micro conversion and, even though the game isn't tremendous the hype is working well. **Xevious** is a pretty good scrolling blast taken from the successful coin-op of the same name



▲Hot: Xevious

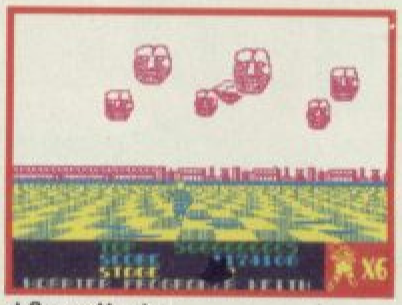
CHART ★ ★ ★ ★ BREAKDOWN

ARCADE

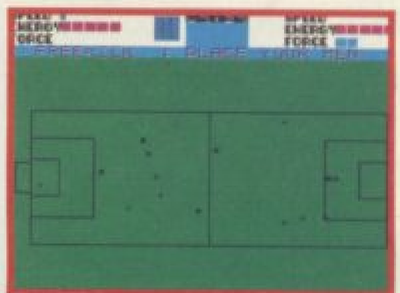
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2	PAPERBOY	ELITE
3	THE GREAT ESCAPE	OCEAN
4	COBRA	OCEAN
5	SPACE HARRIER	ELITE

ADVENTURE

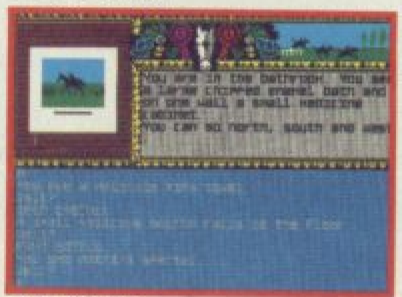
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2	DRACULA	CRL
3	KWAH!	MELBOURNE HOUSE
4	BUGSY	CRL
5	TWICE SHY	MOSAIC



▲Space Harrier



▲Super Soccer



▲Twice Shy



▲180

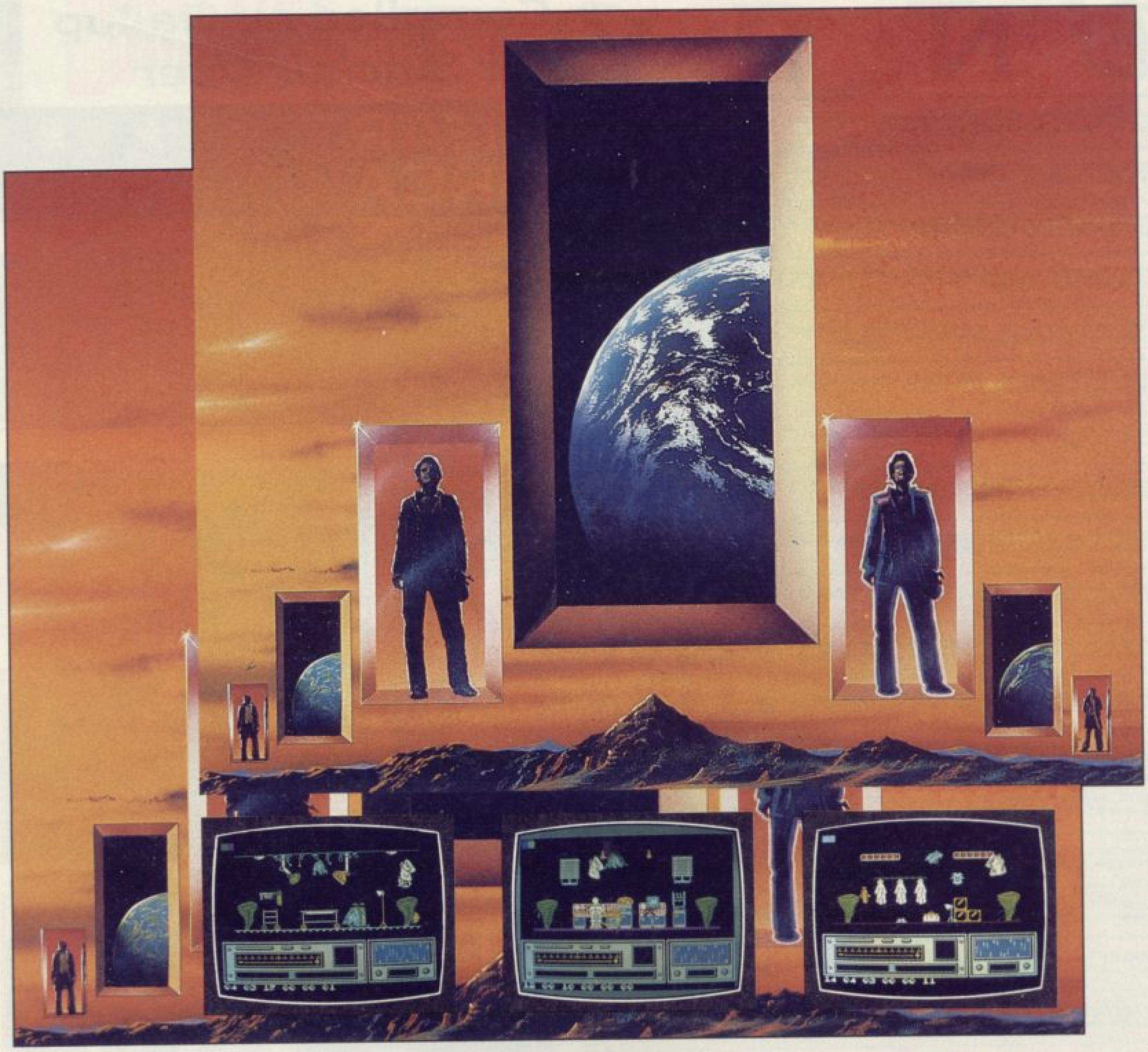
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wo worlds – the mirror image of each other, touch in space through a Time-Warp.

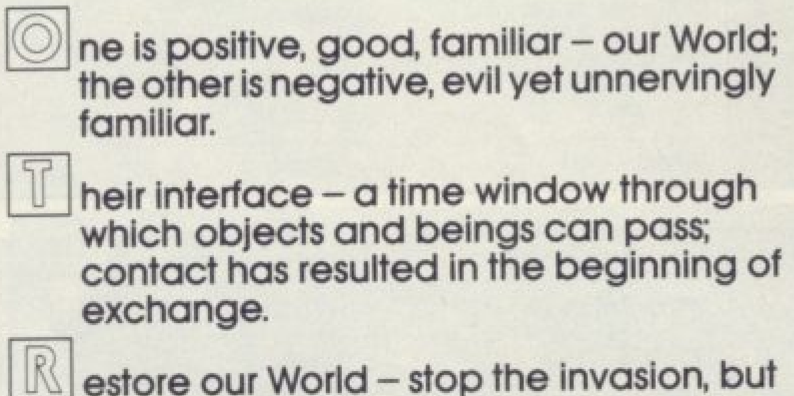
ne is positive, good, familiar – our World; the other is negative, evil yet unnervingly familiar.

heir interface – a time window through which objects and beings can pass; contact has resulted in the beginning of exchange.

estore our World – stop the invasion, but do it <u>now</u>, for as the exchange accelerates, the time window grows larger – domination is a hand!

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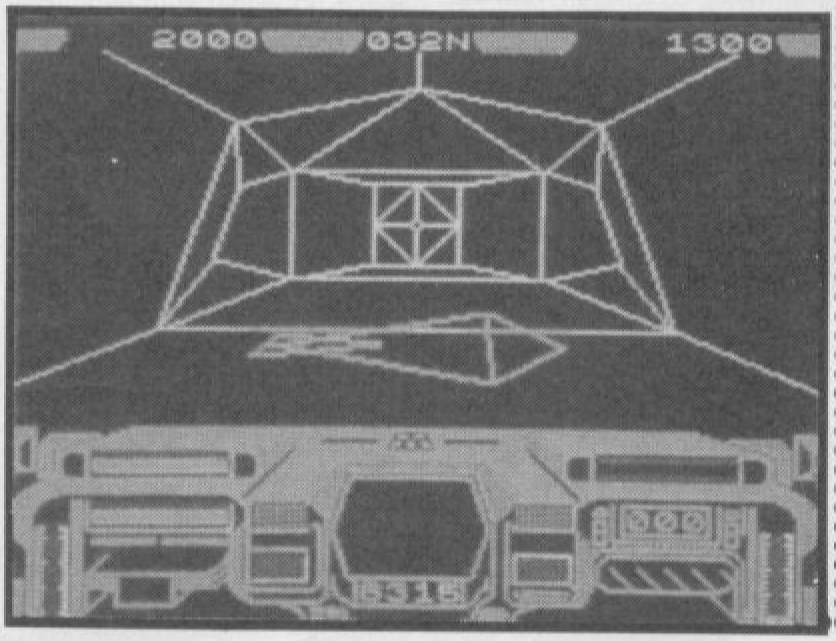
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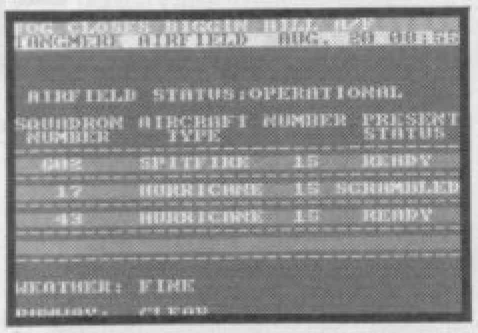
STRATEGY SIMULATION

REVIEW

ACE OF ACES

January, 1943. British pride and guts – lots of guts – are needed if you want to become a WW2 Top Gun. Hermann Goering, commander of Germany's Lufwaffe, has proclaimed than no Brit 'planes can bomb Berlin. You've got to prove him wrong.

Strangely enough, Berlin doesn't figure too strongly in this game. You've got three missions plus a practice mode that enables you to get the hang of your RAF Mosquito bomber. Unfortunately, each mission has to be loaded separately,



and that can take 20 minutes during which time you have to sit by the Spectrum to make sure that the right segment is loading.

The targets are Nazi bombers, U-Boats and POW trains that are on their way to Berlin: You also have to outrun VI missiles. You view each mission from the cockpit where – as in US Gold's **Dambusters** – you must take on the role of pilot, navigator gunner and bomb door operator. There the similarities between the two games end. **Ace of Aces** has better graphics, more action and less strategy than its little brother.

Each mission starts above the clouds. If you're looking for enemy bombers you just move the stick left and right until a dot appears on the radar, then draw it to the centre of the circle where it will appear before you in the sky. If you have trouble spotting it you can switch your view and look out of the left and right cockpit windows. The graphics for these side windows are fantastic. You can see the 'plane's wings and propellors, and the clouds roll in an almost continual slip stream. Don't spend too much time looking out the windows. The Mosquito has a complex control system and if you take your eyes off the dials for too long you could end up spinning into the ground or over heating your engines.

The enemy's 'planes aren't dummies. They will tempt you to dangerously low altitudes and force you to run after them in the hope that your engines will catch fire. Nazi bombers can also turn on you and put bullets through the Mosquito's windscreen. Pilot death and crashes into the ground are the most frequent ways in which the game ends.

The weapons you select at the start of each mission depend upon the types of target you're likely to encounter. If you're after other bombers small rockets and cannon shells are the best bet, while the heavier bombs should be used for larger targets as trains and U-Boats.

Maps at the beginning of the game show the positions of rail tracks and the likely submarine haunts. Targets don't turn up conveniently when you fly into enemy territory, especially if they're not combat capable. You've got to hunt for them and that, next to the long loading period, is likely to irritate you if you're looking for the instant excitement of **Gauntlet** or even **Top Gun.** Bear with these irritations, it's not as if they are irrelevant – they allow you to play a larger, more complicated game. Once the action starts you'll look back on the quiet moments with affection.

World War Two has proved to be a popular topic for the top software houses, but it's unlikely that anyone will beat **Ace of Aces** for some time. It's smooth realistic graphics and the difficulties of finding and destroying Nazi war machines far outweight the unwieldy physical structure of the game. WW2 'plane simulations don't come much better■

FACTS BOX

A big improvement on US Gold's Dambusters. The graphics and game play are as realistic as you could wish

ACE OF ACES
Label: US Gold
Author: Artech Digital Productions
Price: £8.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★☆

BATTLE OF BRITAIN



FACTS BOX

It works, but it plods a bit. Worth it if you enjoy the long drawn out challenge, but Century's Finest Hour is better

BATTLE OF BRITAIN
Label: PSS
Price: £12.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Gary Cook

★★★☆☆

The Battle of Britain was *the* heroic aerial defence of Britain by the Few – the RAF – against the massed bombers and fighters of the German Luftwaffe in 1940.

Now here's PSS's version of history, wrapped up as a full blown wargame. You kick off with a map of Southern England, with just a corner of France showing. Marked on the map are nine airfields, London, various other cities and industrial centres and your radar stations.

When the game begins everything is pretty quiet. It doesn't take long though for ominous black and white crosses to start appearing over the English Channel and the North Sea. These represent formations of German fighters and bombers.

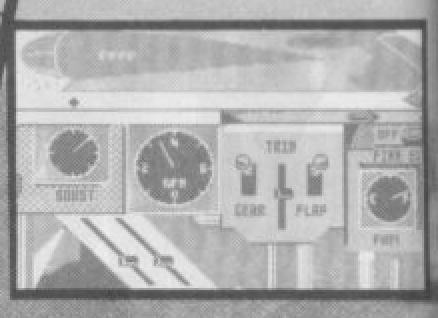
You have to scramble your aircraft, then move your squadrons to wherever you think you will be able to intercept the Germans. Once there, you have a battle. Then you do the whole thing in reverse because your planes will be out of ammunition and very possibly out of fuel as well.

If it sounds simple, then it can be – so long as you're playing the introductory, training game.

But before you dismiss the challenge the game offers, just try having a go at the Blitzkrieg game. The Germans come at you with everything they've got, and your squadrons start going down like ninepins. Your airfields get bombed to oblivion, your radar might as well be microwave ovens for all the good they do you, and Churchill is not pleased.

What do you need to know? The map looks very much like a map – the land is green, the sea is blue. When you scramble a squadron, it takes a turn (five minutes on the clock) before it appears by the airbase it launched from. You then move the on-screen cursor over it, hit the *Fire* button, move the cursor to the destination you want the planes to go to, then hit the *Fire* button again. Simplicity itself.

You can't have more than one squadron in the same square, so the objective is to guess where the Germans are going to be and then surround them.



In this message space, you get bulletins charting your progress – or lack of it: such and such radar station bombed, Biggin Hill runway cratered, Coltishall airfield closed by fog.

When you move the cursor over one of your units, you can get up-dated information on how strong it is, how much fuel it has, how much ammo it has, and so on.

And at the end of each day you get a score screen. This tells you how well you did, and gives you a percentage rating. At this point, if you're playing the campaign game, you get a re-supply screen where you allocate new planes and pilots to your airfields.

Battle of Britain is a very workmanlike simulation. All very neat but somehow it lacks a certain sparkle.

Worth getting, nevertheless. Don't bother with the arcade sequences though – they're not much fun ■



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BUT WE MISTIMED IT!
A two way test of skill and nerve – can you out-manoeuvre the awesome ogre and blast a path through the myriad of colourful blocks and on the return, are your reflexes fast enough to retrieve the speeding missile, deflected from its block shattering journey or regurgitated contemptuously from the ogre's mouth.
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Ranar

Hopping up from the back straight, a couple of months after the competition, comes what appears to be a Gauntlet variant from Hewson.

Ranarama looks for a good ten minutes like more swords and sorcery on a tiled background with carnage on a grand scale. Except that your hero is a frog.

This impression is completely wrong. The frog is still there but Ranarama turns out to be a good deal more subtle and varied than Gauntlet and, personally, I prefer it.

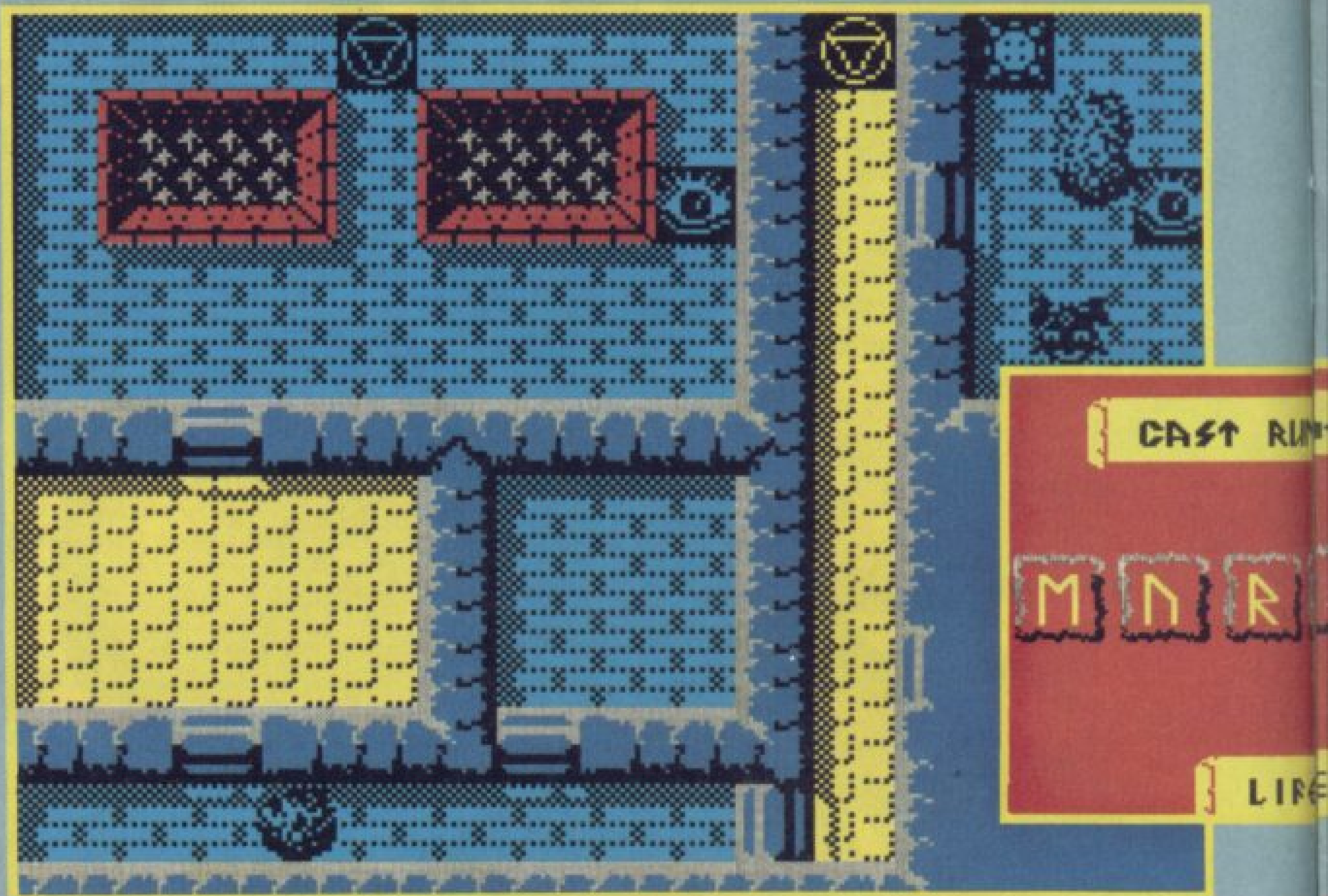
Steve Turner is the man responsible. His last program was Quazatron and in an odd sort of way there are similarities with this game. Your frog does, you'll be pleased to know, get to kill a lot of assorted monsters but the key to Ranarama is the sub-plot – if you can kill a warlock and unscramble the word ranarama within a time limit you can then (also within a time limit) pick up runes.

Runes are the building blocks of spells. And spells determine your defensive and offensive powers – the more powerful the warlock the more useful the runes you can pick up but then the more difficult the warlock is to beat in the first place.

This is very similar to the way you could build up your droid in Quazatron and there is definitely a similar 'feel' to the game.

There are over a hundred screens of playing area in Ranarama, all broadly in the Gauntlet style. They're on different levels connected by lifts. The lower the level the more likely you are to die and the more powerful you'll need to be to stand a chance.

Some squares in the layout have special features. Stand on one sort and you get a map of





Stripped to the waist, barefoot and alert, a stocky figure stalks through the bamboo thickets. His arms raised, ready to loose an attack of unbelievable ferocity and speed upon any man or beast that may dare to give him a wonky glance.

This, fellow brick-kickers, is the one "you've all been waiting for". Early last year, the entire games-playing 'community' could be found hammering away in **Way of the Exploding Fist** at computerised or human opponents in ludicrously serious bouts of hand/to-hand GBH.

Now, almost a year later comes the sequel. At face value there doesn't appear to be a whole lot you can do to make a sequel of a game that – essentially – involved little more than kicking things.

So Melbourne House has decided to change things a bit, and actually give you a purpose in life, as opposed to simply wandering around, hacking away at the nearest person.

Your quest is to rid your home-land of a terrible tyrant who is making the lives of your fellow villagers very tedious.

Obviously, your foe isn't stupid enough to leave himself open to attack, and surrounds himself with lots of completely deadly bodyguards.

It's not really worth your while trolling up to the Warlord and suggesting that he should leave your homeland alone and vacate the premises alone when you bear in mind that you are only a novice in the martial arts.

Thus, the first part of the game centres around your self-tuition of aforesaid arts. While walking around, you will stumble upon a number of scrolls. Now, each scroll contains some of the secrets known only to the most boss-eyed and creepy walk-on-rice-

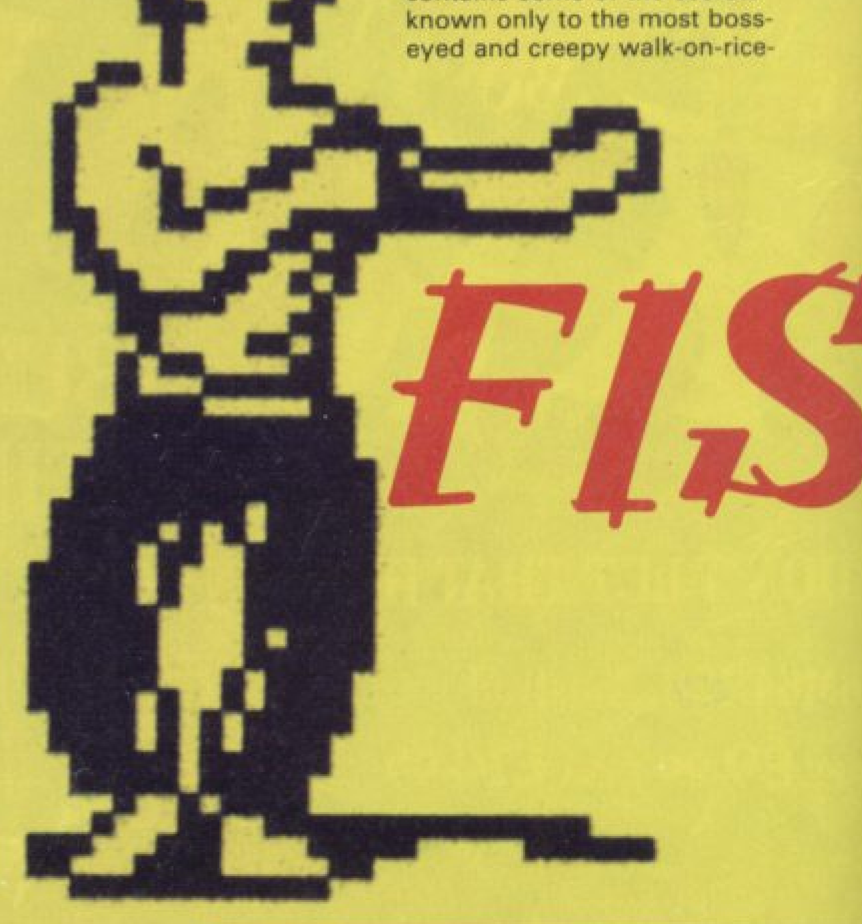
FACTS BOX

Definite improvement on the first game. Now you get the chance to put all that whacking to a kind of purpose

FIST II
Label: Melbourne House
Author: Beam Software
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various
Reviewer:

Reviewer: Tim Douglas

★★★★★

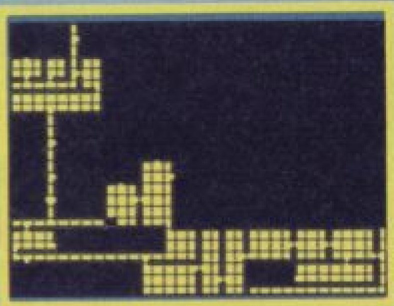


FIS

RAMA

the current level, another gives you a 'lucky dip' casting of a spell – often a 'smart bomb' which clears the current screen.

One difficulty is you play the game blind. You don't see a room until you actually enter it and often door locations are not revealed until you fire a 'show' spell. This is standard equipment when you start the game, more powerful spells



include ones which will show the location on the map of warlocks.

Monster movement is intelligent – the warlocks in particular judge your strength relative to theirs and will either make straight for you or make a run for it. You'll have to be pretty sneaky.

Unlike Gauntlet where you have to kill everything there are often reasons not to get involved in attack in Ranarama. If you take on warlocks you'd better have the power to kill them because if you just wound them they get very, very angry indeed.

Graphics are smooth and speedy. Although monsters are all one colour it matters little and the overall impression, because of the various background features, is of a very colourful game. Even the character set has been redesigned beautifully and looks great.

The sub-game which involves rearranging the Ranarama by swopping letters in pairs seems utterly impossible within the time limit when you first try. Gradually though you learn to work methodically without panicing (too much) and start collecting runes. A spell square in the playing area allows you to scroll through the spells you currently have and choose from any new spells which your current rune stock allows you to create. More strategy in deciding what powers will help you most.

Ranarama is brilliantly crafted. It ought to appeal to those who like Gauntlet and its varients but really it has so much more to offer in game variety and inventiveness. Even the sound effects (standard 48K) are rather good■

SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC



▲ The sub-plot bit. Rearrange the letters of ranarama in a given time. At first it seems impossible...

FACTS BOX

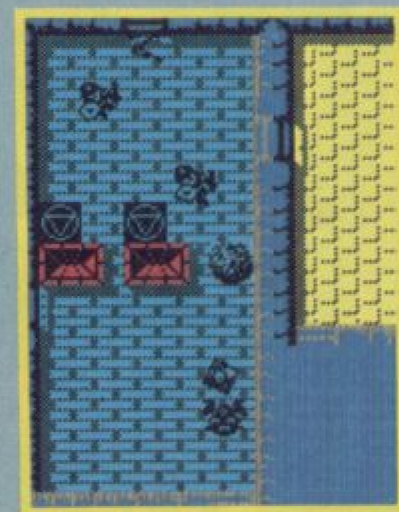
Not another Gauntlet varient, although it looks like it. Instead a brilliant multi-facetted blast, cast and thinking game

RANARAMA
Label: Hewson
Author: Steve Turner
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★★

ARCADE REVIEW



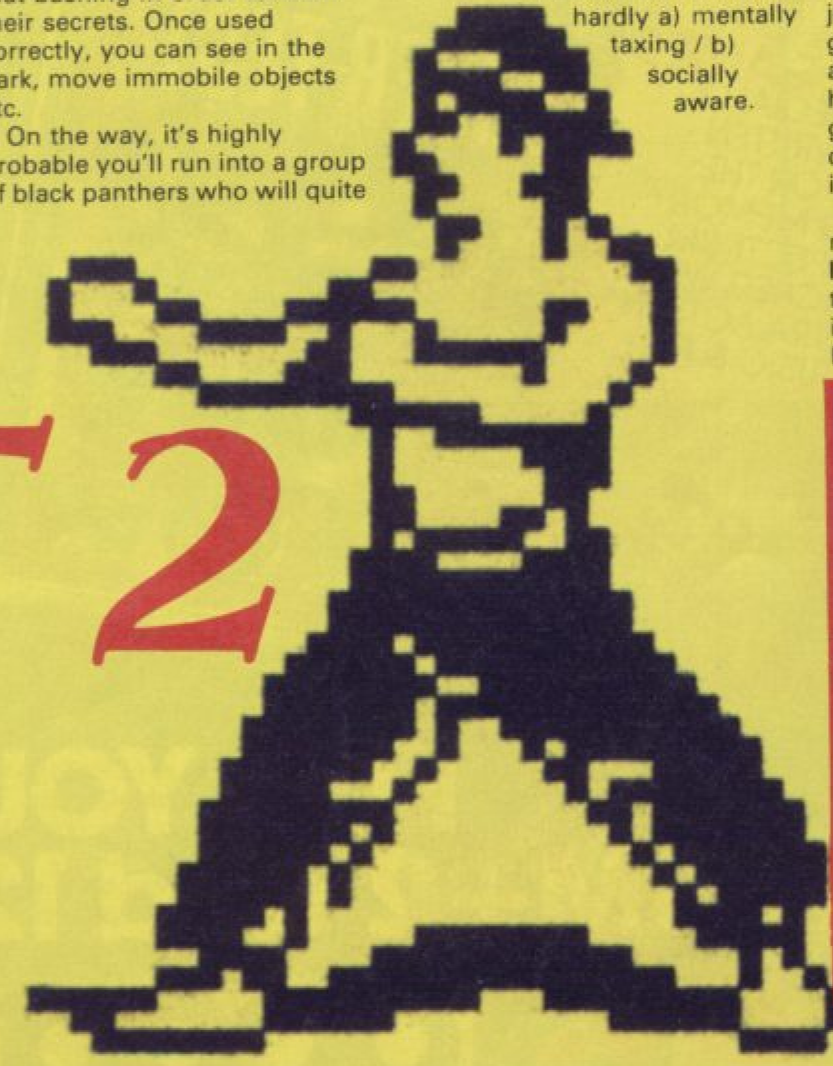
ST 2

paper wizard types as found in all the best **Fist**-style movies.

Once you've got the scrolls (yes, hahaha very "double entendre", I'm sure) it's off to the nearest temple for a bit of mat-bashing in order to learn their secrets. Once used correctly, you can see in the dark, move immobile objects etc.

On the way, it's highly probable you'll run into a group of black panthers who will quite happily tear you to itsy bitsy ribbons if you don't do something about it. Doing something about it seems to consist entirely of kicking them very hard in the head.

Moderately funny but hardly a) mentally taxing / b) socially aware.



Other delays are incurred by dealing with the bodyguards that you encounter.

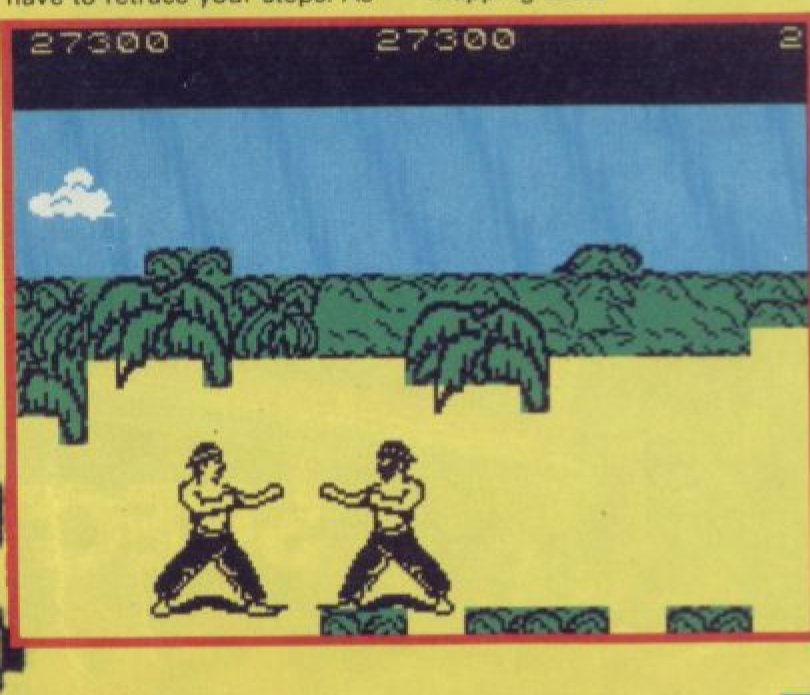
This is real **Fist** territory as you flail away with limb and joystick, inflicting increasingly effective blows. Most of the joystick moves from the first game are here, roundhouses and all. Each time you score a hit on your foe, a pleasing graphical whack indicates contact, and his stamina gauge is depleated.

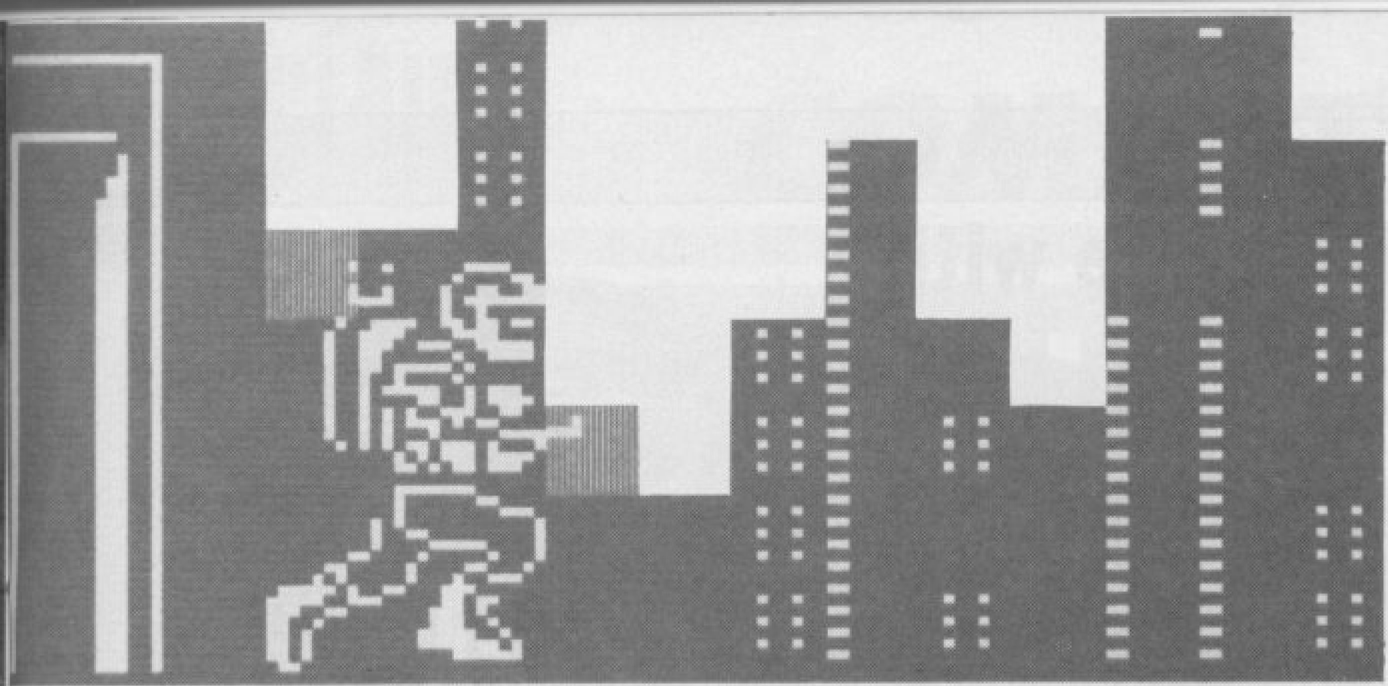
There's a good deal of running around involved in **Fist II**. As each scroll has its own temple, and you can only use it in the correct one, you'll often have to retrace your steps. As this often involves avoiding the groups of black cat things and more bodyguards, it can become taxing – even challenging.

Graphically it's swings and roundabouts. The backgrounds aren't great, and the scrolling is far from pixel-smooth. On the other hand, your character runs about very pleasantly and the fights are much better than in the original.

From Crack-crack-bam to Which-way-now?-crack-bam.

Lacks polish, but **Fist II** is still a damned good fight for anyone's money. And this time there's scope for a bit of mapping too■





ARCADE ★ REVIEW

JUDGE DREDD

Judge Dredd is probably the best game I've seen this month. Based (as if you didn't know) on the absurdly successful character in *2000AD* comic.

Dredd is part of an elite squad of law-enforcement officers, authorised to try any criminal on the spot and deliver sentence accordingly. Often it's necessary for Dredd to put a heat-seeking bullet through the kidneys of a fleeing 'perp'. Still, I guess that's the price you have to pay if you insist on dropping litter on a 21st century sidewalk.

Melbourne House has managed to pull off a game that has nearly all of the atmosphere of the cartoon. You can run along the walkways, blasting anything that moves. It's great. After running for a while, something – criminal/robot/rat/ innocent bystander etc – will make the mistake of stepping out in front of you. With a flick of a button, you switch to high-explosive shells and waste the offending creature.

That's crime-prevention, folks! MegaCity One is a vast sprawling city of high-rise buildings, freeways and cityblocks, these latter monstrous constructions a single one of which houses more people than a whole town of today.

Under such pressurised living conditions, we are told, tempers are frayed more easily. Crimes such as murder are rife, and are induced by the slightest things. Smoking and littering reach such remarkable proportions, they are filed as Serious Crimes.

Judge Dredd begins by displaying an overview of Mega City One. Instantly, small icon-style windows pop up over certain cityblocks. Each window indicates that a crime is in progress. The illustration contained within will give you an insight into the severity of the incident. As new Judge you may not wish to handle an armed robbery on your first assignment, whereas an old hand will quite happily wander into dangerous zones with a view to reducing the population significantly.

FACTS BOX

Finally. A decent licence conversion. Futuristic reactionary opression of a big scale. From 2000AD's bad good-guy

JUDGE DREDD
Label: Melbourne House
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★★★★★

Once you've decided which area of the city you want to visit, highlight the appropriate block with your Dredd-selector-logo and hit *Fire*. Next the screen will change to show a street scene with you, as Dredd, standing on one of the platforms.

Running around below you are numerous innocent citizens. These are easy fodder and crumple up and die after a single shot.

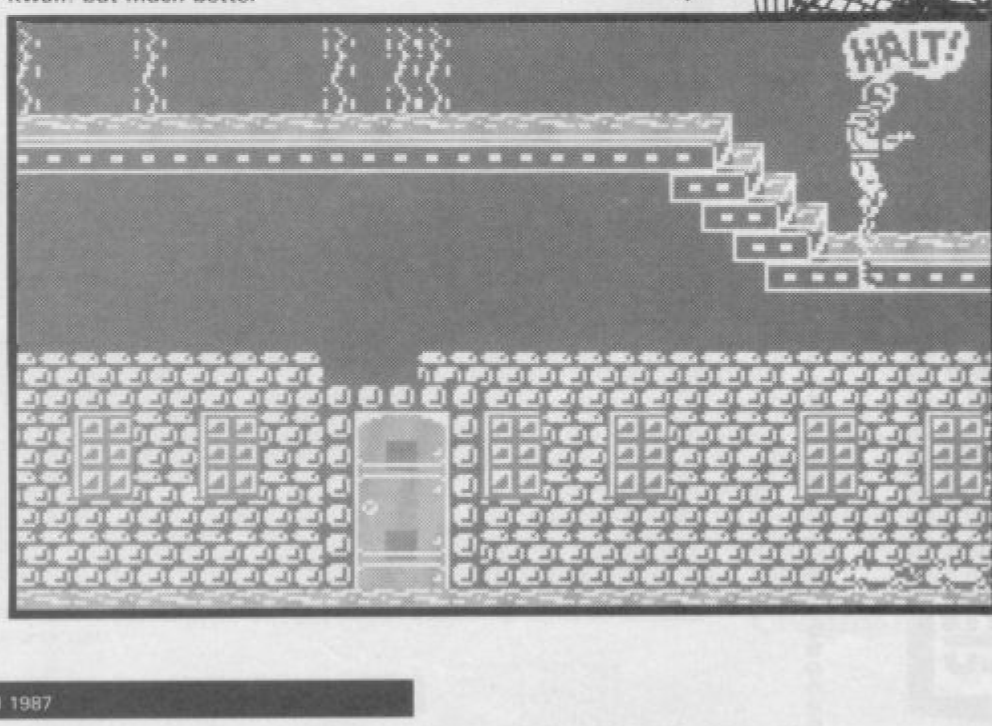
Criminals, though, are much tougher. These have suffered such years of depravation and social pressure they have become almost bullet-proof and take a good many shots before they'll go down. The manner in which the bad guys 'buy it' is extremely pleasing. Everything is executed in comic-book style, from the Blam! of your gun to the Aarg! of the perp and his wonderfully exaggerated buckling, sprawling stance. After a few shots, they collapse in an untidy heap on the floor.

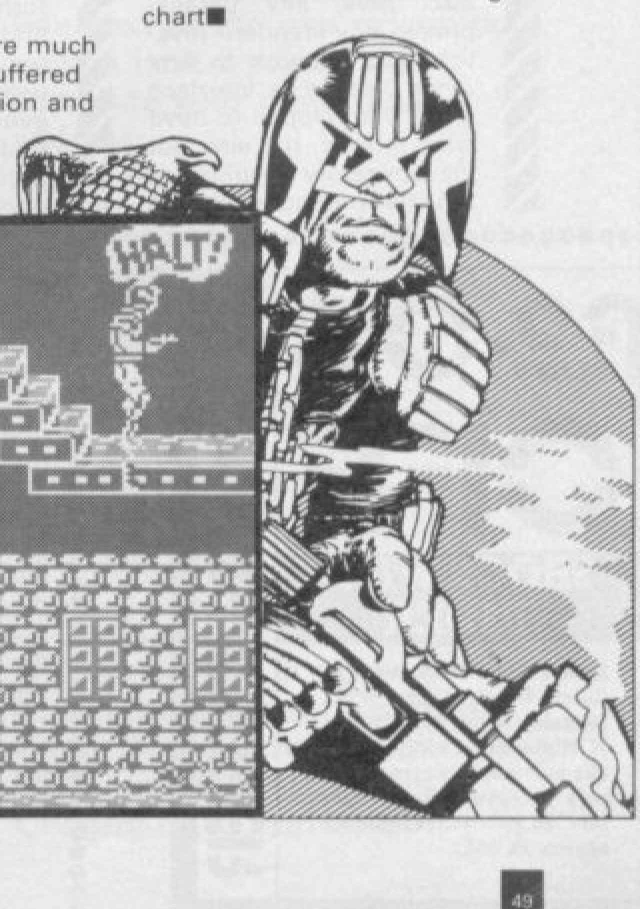
Once you've dealt with the creep at hand, you can go back to the menu and decide where to go next.

Most parts of the city found in the comic are represented, in some form or other. Even the underground bits, probably the most dangerous, as they're wholly un-policed. In such areas, you'll encounter all kinds of strange things. Robot dogs are the biggest problems. They'll bound up and clank you to death if you're not careful. These suckers take bullets in the rump without flinching. I frequently found myself crouching on the sidewalk, blasting away at an enormous on-coming monster that appeared to eat the bullets like Scooby snacks.

Dredd is great fun to play, and there's also a fair bit of snap decision making – it hardly qualifies as real thought – involved between the killing sprees. It feels like a comic strip, and scores major points in the entertainment-while-blasting chart■

The authentic 'Zap' and 'Pow' bubbles give the whole thing a real comic feel – a bit like Melbourne House's other program Kwah! but much better ▼





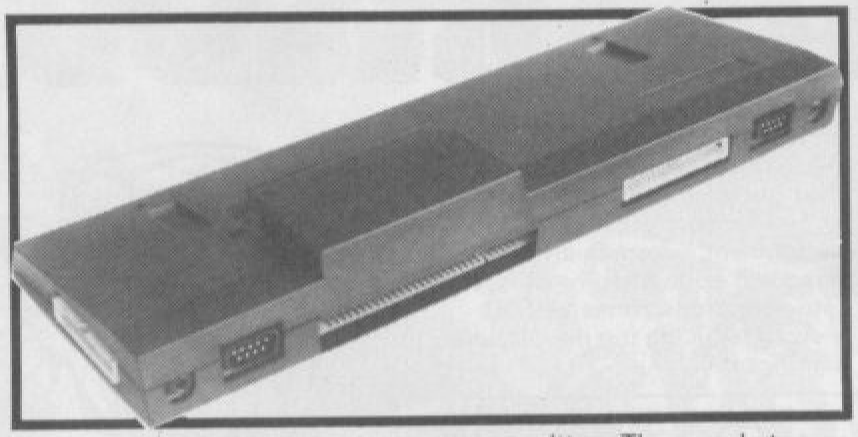
Disciple with the right connections



Say halo to the Disciple – a holy wonderful interface.

The breakup of Sinclair Research has produced a swarm of peripherals from ex-employees with an intimate knowledge of the Spectrum and a mortgage to feed. The latest add-on from the exclusive ex-Sinclair club is the subtly-named Disciple disc/ printer / joystick / network unit.

Canonised in September, at the same time as the 128K+2, it's already into the second version, and this is the one reviewed here.



The Disciple resembles nothing so much as an overgrown Interface 1. It fits in the same way, with a couple of screws bolting it to the underside of Spectrum 48Ks and it's compatible with both 128Ks and 128K+2s. The connectors used to hook up to the unreasonably large number of accessories that it supports are mostly BBC micro type, thus assuring lots of leads available immediately. See, the Beeb is good for something...

Briefly, you can use any disc drive, any parallel printer, any standard joystick, and network to any other Disciple or Interface 1 that you happen to have lying around. It's also got the obligatory Magic Button, for putting desirable data on to disc by divine intervention.

The first time you use your Disciple, you have to configure it to your specifications. This is done by a short and explicit program loaded from cassette. You get asked various questions about your disc drive, your printer and exactly how you want to use the network. The program is logical, painless and well explained in the manual. Once that's done, a disc is formatted by the program and your personalised system is saved. That disc is used in future for starting everything up but, if you find that you've got something wrong or you buy a new printer, you can always configure it again. It only took me about three minutes, including looking things up in my printer handbook.

The network is better than the old Interface 1, as one station can always talk to another, even if the other is busy. Perfect for schools with lots of Spectrums, especially since all stations can use one disc drive, and a station designated Master can look at the screen of any of the pupils on the net.

The joystick can be either Kempston or Sinclair type, which covers just about every game ever written. They work, too.

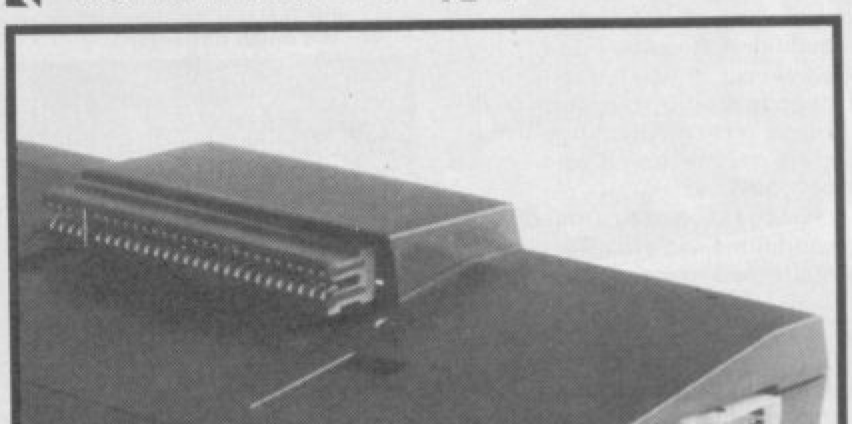
As the software inside the Disciple doesn't use any of Spectrum's Ram, it will work with most commercial games and stuff. I took a peek inside, and was suitably impressed with the quality of construction. Just a couple of wire links... better than the Interface 1.

All these facilities are available from Basic in much the same way as interface 1 did it (like *Load *"M"*,1, "Kalisti), or by friendlier syntax (*Load* D1 "Hoopla") or by selecting a program from the catalogue listing *(Load P*3 loads the third program on the catalogue).

The snapshot button works well, too. A bonus over other similar products is that if you press *Cap Shift* before pressing the snapshot button, you get a copy of the screen on your printer. Very useful to prove to your friends that you really have got to the end of **Zappem**. And if you have a game or peripheral that objects to the Disciple, there's an *Off* button. There's a full edge connector brought out to the back, in fact it's even got some extra signals, to do with the disc drive.

And it all works luverly. The manual's good, clear and with a few helpful hints that might even stop people writing to *Sinclair Surgery*. Techies will like the list of port addresses (but there's not much more heavy info), and I hear tell of a hook-code compatible version on the cards.

I'm impressed. With peripherals like this, the Spectrum can walk on water. This interface saint bad (that's enough religious jokes – Ed)■



Disciple with the right connections



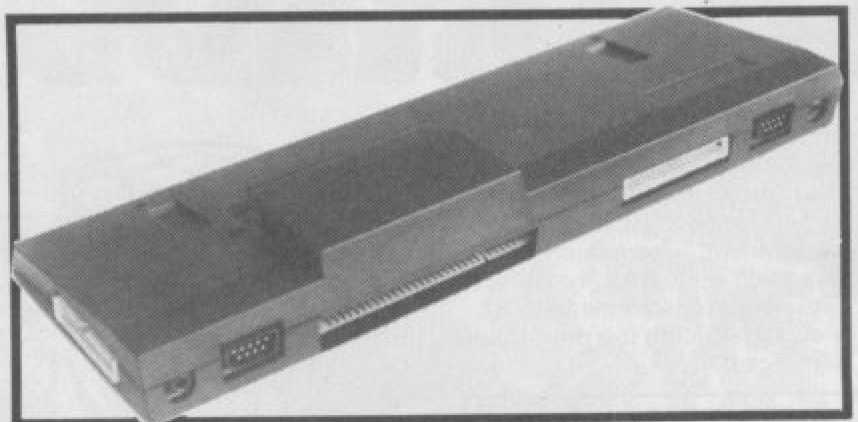
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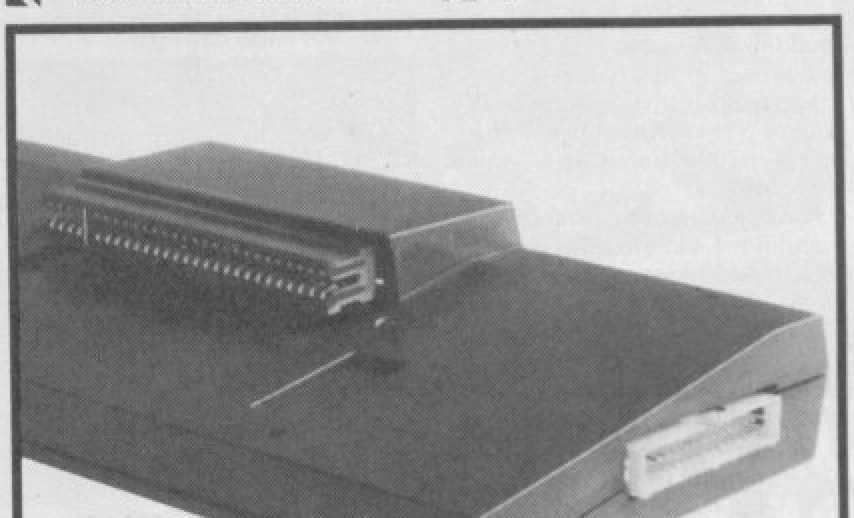
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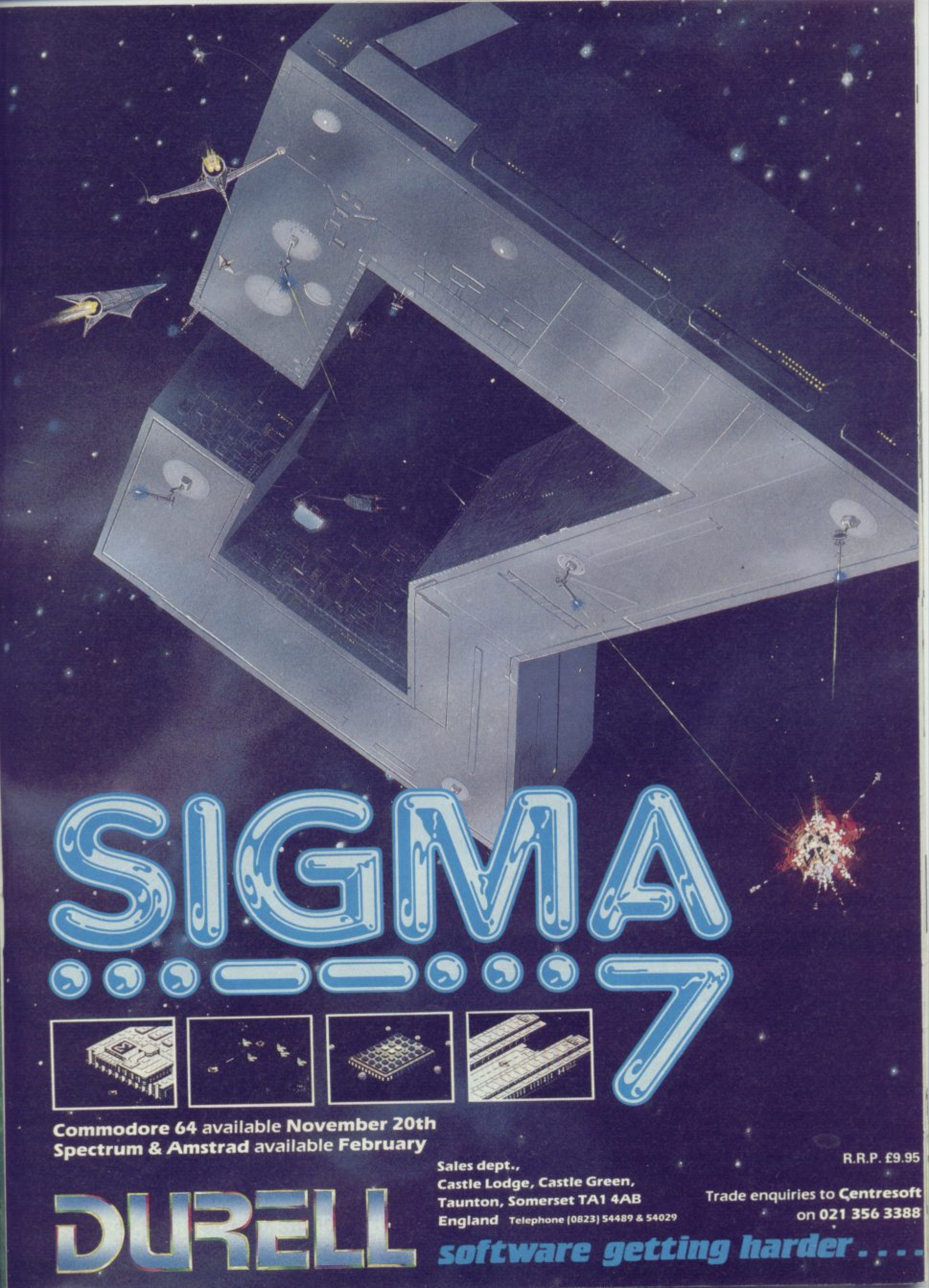
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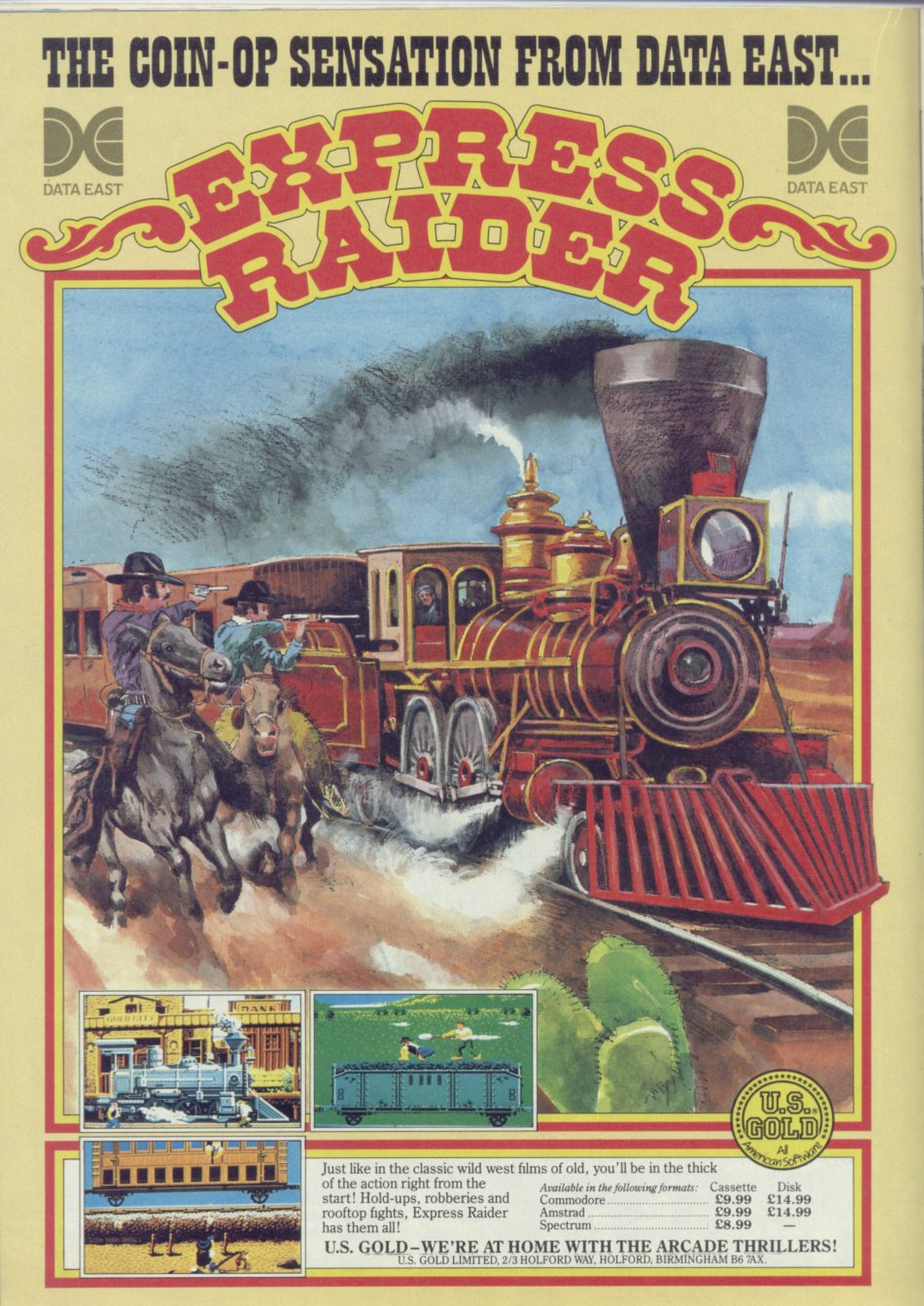
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BUDGET £1·99 £2·99 REVIEW

PROFESSIONAL SNOOKER SIMULATION

Not another snooker simulation! That's right, it's not, but it is one of the best snooker games I've seen. It's keyboard driven; you can't use a joystick at all. Only slightly perturbed by this I selected the English language version of the game and, lined up my first shot with the rotating cue.

Moving the cue around the cue ball – quickly clockwise or very slowly anti-clockwise – a window at the top of the display shows a cue's-eye view of any white/coloured ball line ups.

This display is there to help judge the spin on the ball. If the cue hits the edge of a red that red will spin more than if it had been hit smack in the middle. In addition a ball hit on the left will spin to the right, so you've got to get the angle right. It's two-player only – no chance to stuff the computer which is irritating. The force of the cue is set by the length of time between the first and second presses of the keyboard *Fire* button. The longer the time the lighter the tap.

I potted a red, on about my fifth visit to the table, and I got to nominate a colour, by pressing it's value, two for yellow up to seven for black. The idea is to clear the reds and then pot the colours in order of points value – starting with yellow. I didn't mange it. Still I managed to clear most of the reds during one of my practice visits to the table, and managed to knock up a break of 19.

It feels realistic and is graphically excellent – you might be put off that you can't play against the computer however■

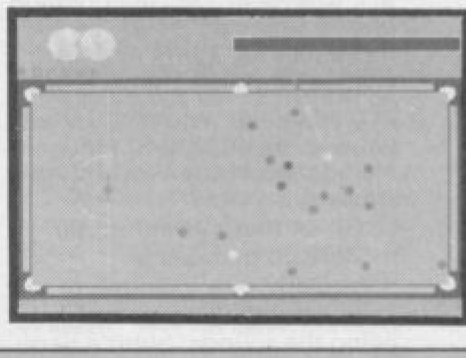
FACTS BOX

Graphically better even than Steve Davis Snooker, from CDS. But you can't play against the computer

PROFESSIONAL SNOOKER SIMULATOR
Label: Code Masters
Author: Godwin Graham Bsc
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K

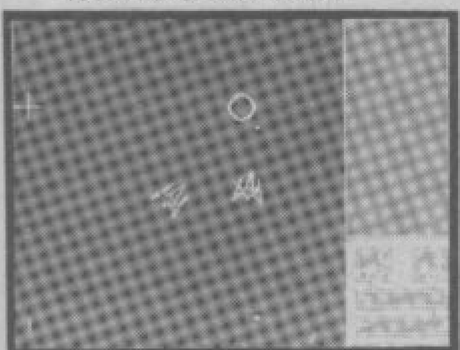
Reviewer: John Gilbert

★★★★☆



HYPERBOWL

Hyperbowl is another one of those Mastertronic games which manages to create a new idea out of a couple of old ones. In this case **Asteroids** meets **American Football** creating a game which could have been called **Footoids** or **Asterball** but wasn't, thankfully.



Remember in the olden days when computers only had two graphics and spaceships just looked like triangles? So it is with the **Hyperbowl** playing screen. Two triangles, or similar geometric shapes, do battle on a playing area which consists of black, with the occasional dotted line dividing the blackness into large squares of emptyness. Beyond being a poetic concept it has no function in the game except to help you get a rough idea where you are.

The game is simple. You use your geometric spaceship to barge or fire a puck across the opponent's goal line. You get one point ordinarily, or two if you manage to push it into a line that marks the middle section of the goal. Obviously the other ship is going to be blasting and barging the puck in the other direction. Like **Asteroids** the ships, lacking friction, are somewhat difficult to control – it takes a while to build up momentum and, having got moving, it is very easy to hurtle at zillions of miles an hour straight past where you wanted to go.

Vital to having any idea about what is going on is a scanner which fills the right hand section of the screen – this shows you where you are, where the other ship is and where the puck is. I managed to survive for a while on idiots level, but clearly thrashing the thing on sensible skill levels will be very difficult indeed■

FACTS BOX

Asteriods meet American Football. Both win. Simple to learn difficult to master. Another Mastertronic winner

HYPERBOWL
Label: Mastertronic
Author: Steve Hughes
Price: £1.99
Memory: 128K/48K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★☆

HOWZAT

Cricket is not the liveliest of games and that could be why **Howzat**, originally released at full price by Wyvern Software, is such a lame duck.

You'd expect, maybe, the atmosphere of hot, sticky, June days. Batsmen and bowlers would be controlled by joystick and there would be action packed bird's and wicket's eye views of the grounds. Instead, **Howzat!** is played by rigid little matchstick men – I think they're men – who are almost invisible against a sickly green green.

Admittedly, at the start of the game you get to select the event and your team, but that's about all the action you'll see: It's a bit like watching Geoffrey Boycott in a particularly bad year.

You can take part in a one day test or in a series such as the Benson and Hedges League or the Texaco Trophy. Your choice of event is unlikely to influence on play – it doesn't make the darndest bit of – difference but it's nice to add that extra bit of authenticity to the game.

Teams can be made up of county or test stars, or your own, specially created, players. When you choose your 'own' team you type in their names and give each batting and bowling ratings between zero and ten. It's possible to build up the ultimate team, who all have top marks and can thrash the opposition, but that rather defeats the purpose of the simulation. There should have been some sort of restriction on alloting rating points.

Once you've chosen the captain and wicket keepers of both teams the toss decides the order of play. The bowling team has all the cards as the batting team can only decide which two players should go in and whether to run after a successful swing of the bat. The bowling team, on the other hand, can position fielders and start a bowling run. You can't, however, decide what sort of bowling action you want or the force of delivery. Some simulation where everything's randomly generated!

Play actions are randomly generated on the batting side as well. Once the bowler's pitched the ball you'll either hit it or not, it and either will or won't be caught. You then have the choice – Yes/No – of making a run.

As cricket simulations go – usually very slowly – **Howzat** is certainly LBW, even with the budget price tag.

The game would have been just as exciting it it played with itself■

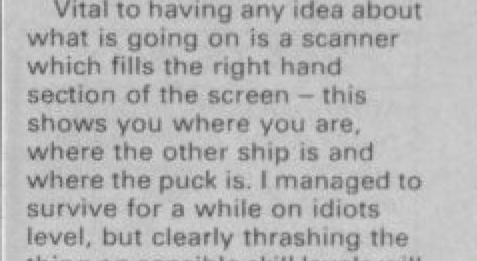
FACTS BOX

Simulation? Ha! It's a fairly futile game, duller than the real thing. Alternative has been caught out with this one

HOWZAT!
Label: Alternative Software
Author: Wyvern
Price: £1.99

Reviewer: John Gilbert

★★☆☆☆



STRATEGY SIMULATION REVIEW

BRIAN CLOUGH'S FOOTBALL FORTUNES

At last! The real reason why Brian Clough was never offered the England job!

Lending his name to CDS' **Fooball Fortunes** shows a lack of managerial judgement on a par with neglecting to mark Maradonna in the World Cup Finals.

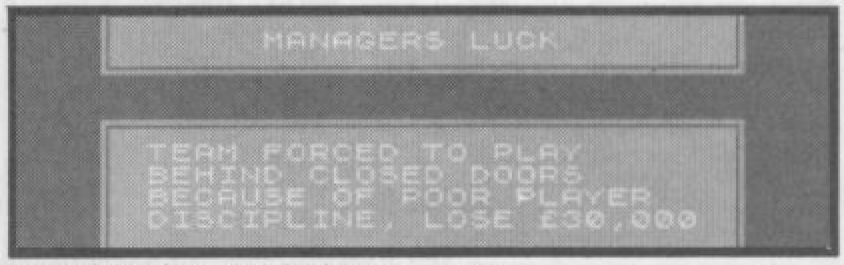
It's not that this computer moderated game is a particularly dire example of the various footballing games going the rounds, but it's very expensive, irritatingly fiddly (with its cards and counters), impossible to play on your own and definitely not championship material.

CDS' game puts the emphasis on the 'Fortune' and doesn't give an opportunity to show any tactical prowess.

As a former top-flight football manager myself (Welwyn, Hatfield & District Sunday League – division II), I was expecting my year of experience to pay off against the motley collection of Ipswich and Portsmouth fans I had selected to help review the game.

But after the first season, with my two stars Rush and Lineker lost to a car crash and Liam Brady sold off due to the computer telling me to fork our £300,000 to buy my home ground, my managerial rating was as miserable as my luck.

The game is for two to five players and the action is in two stages. Between each match your counter plods around a *Monopoly*-style board, landing on such squares as: Sponsorship (Take £30,000); Wages (you actually have to pay the rabble); Auction (a player comes on to the transfer market) and Selection Problems or Managerial Luck (pure chance).



Then it's the weekend and you pick the team from your squad, input two numbers (defensive strength and attacking strength), and find out if you've won, drawn or lost.

There's no game action. No note of who played well or badly. No tactical changes to impart at halftime. And no wonder Bobby Robson got the vote.

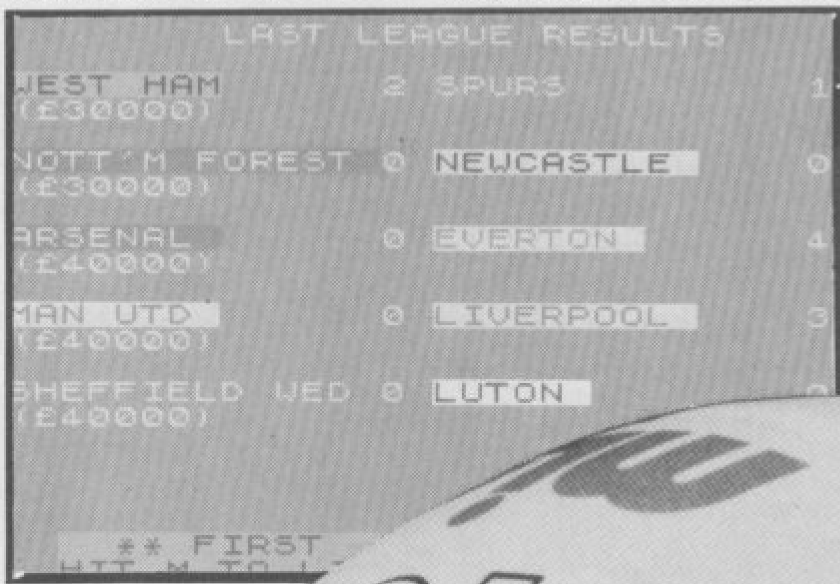
The computer must feel equally unfulfilled. It performs the most routine of tasks – rolling the dice, printing out results, compiling league tables and controlling the other non-player teams (these merely turn up for matches).

Us humans have to keep check of our own money and player cards. And the best bit is we can cheat like crazy – the computer is none the wiser.

The Spectrum prints up good news or catastrophe whenever a player's counter lands on Selection Problems or Managerial Luck and it prints up a random starting strength at the beginning of the season.

Oh for a game which requires a modicum of tactical thought or managerial strategy.

But if you want to know what really rankled – Portsmouth won the Championship! I ask you Brian!!■



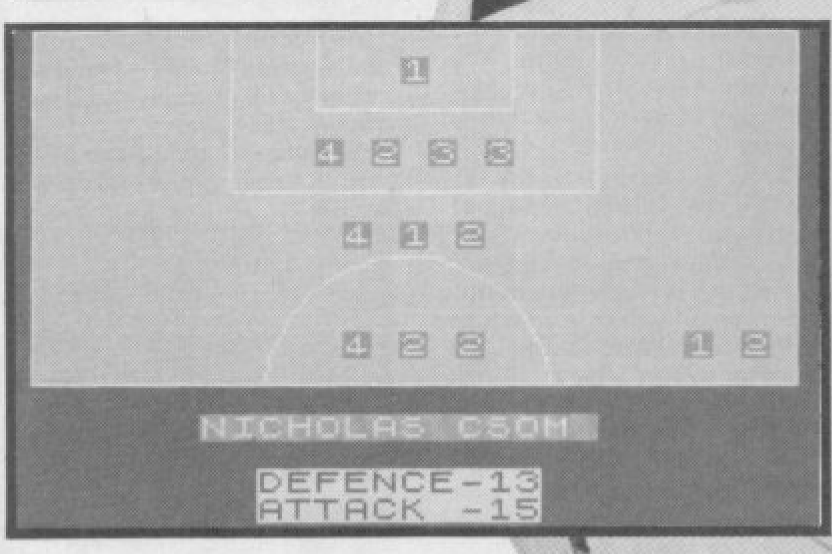
FACTS BOX

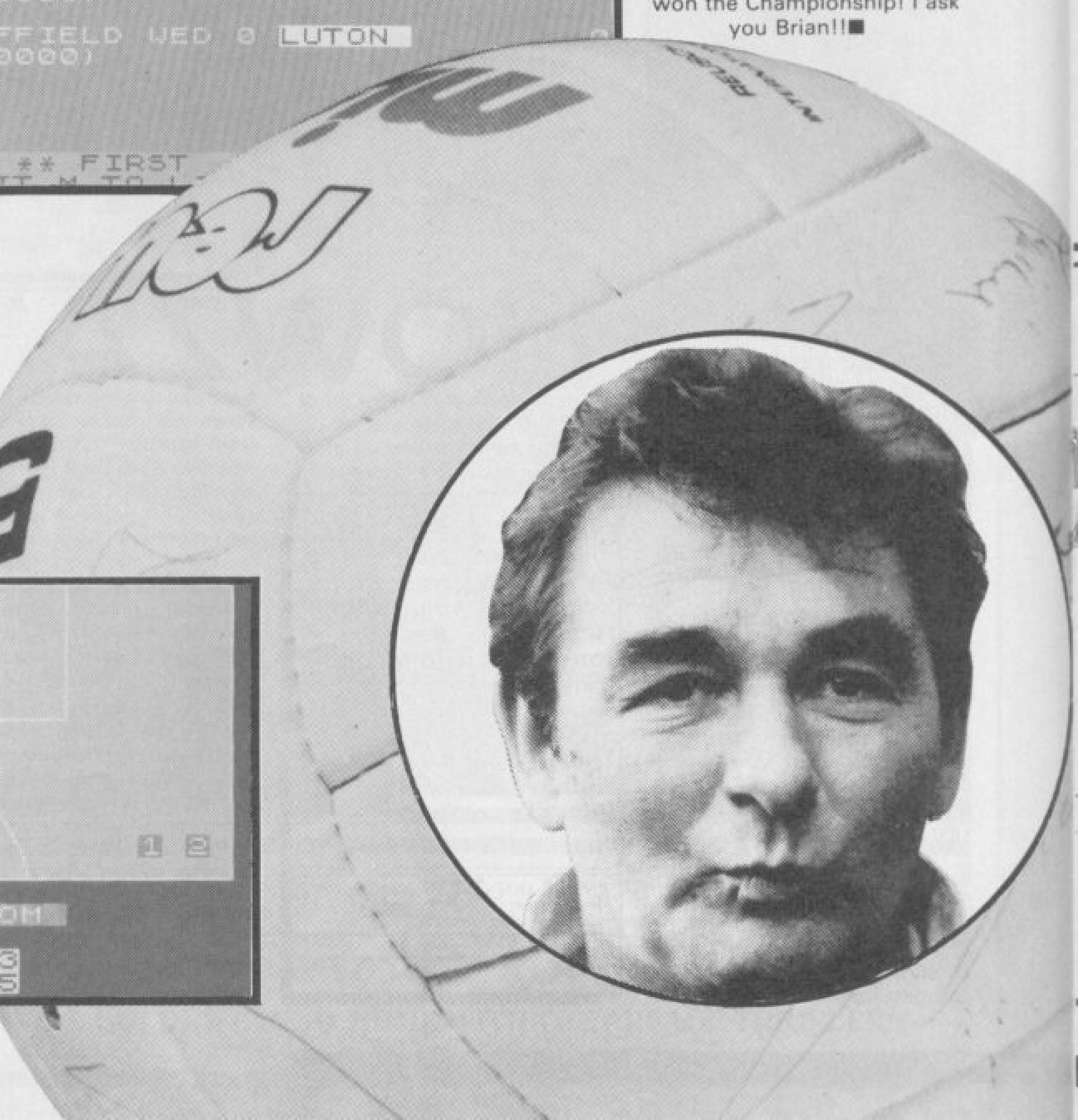
Multi-player board/computer game combination where skill seems unnecessary. Expensive despite the trimmings

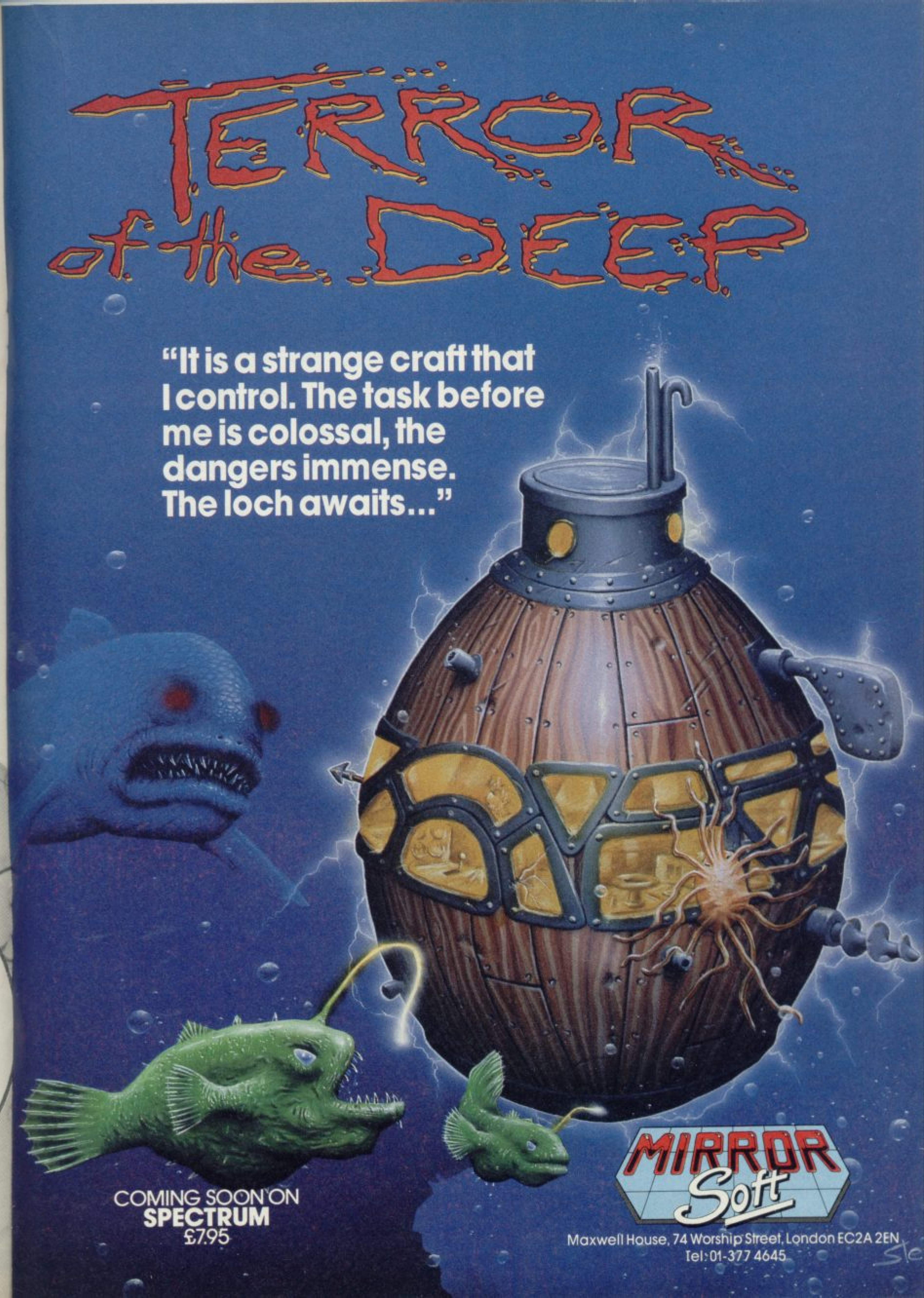
BRIAN CLOUGH'S FOOTBALL FORTUNES
Label: CDS
Price: £14.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: [signature]

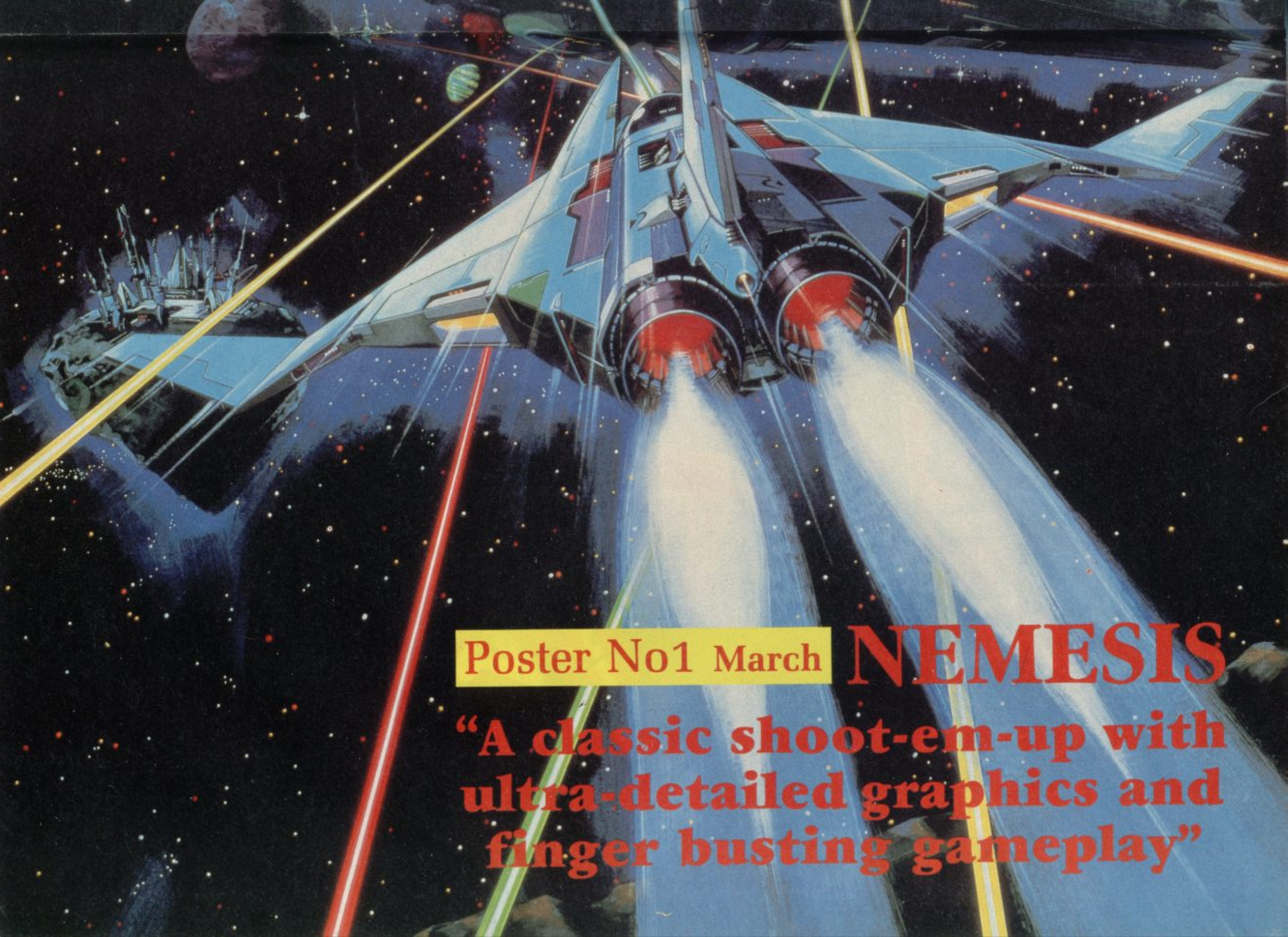
★★☆☆☆






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SINCLAIR user


Poster No1 March
NEMESIS
“A classic shoot-em-up with ultra-detailed graphics and finger busting gameplay”


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BACKGROUND NOISE

Background Noise looks behind the top games of the moment and speaks to the programmers who sweated blood to produce them. Background Noise looks from the author's point of view — at the particular programming problems and the way they were solved

IMPOSSABALL
by John M Phillips

CREATION

At first sight creating a three dimensional environment on a computer seems to be simple, merely a case of applying standard perspective formulae to map the chosen environment onto a flat two dimensional screen. However, creating a convincing display requires consideration of many aspects. There are the limitations of the human eye, emphasis of depth and solidity and in the case of computer games, insuring that objects within the scene interact in a realistic manner.

Impossaball started life as a vertically scrolling race game with the player looking down into a 3D corridor. Walls at either side of the screen were drawn in perspecitve to try and give a sense of depth. Unfortunately, our eyes tend to prefer horizontal movement, especially for 3D scenes, so I was forced to turn the game over on its side, the walls becoming floor and ceiling.

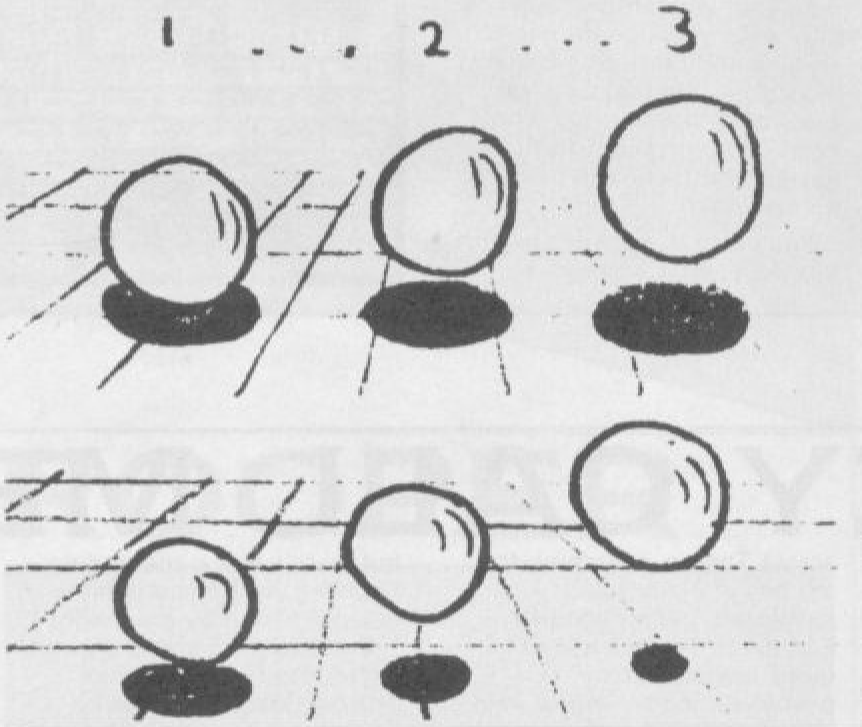
This change of view inspired a totally different type of game, with the ideas of a ball bouncing through an obstacle course of spikes and cylinders coming together immediately.

Having the game-plan worked out at the start reduced the development time considerably although I was still haunted by the old problem of better ideas turning up when it was too late to change everything. The entire game took about 10-12 weeks from the initial design to the final version and was written using a BBC with a fast cross-assembler and Ram disc enabling the entire program to be re-assembled and down-loaded in under two minutes.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Viewing the 3D corridor from the side really enhanced the feeling of depth but created many new problems in terms of programming. The main one being how to efficiently scroll the scene left and right at a variable speed (the final game scrolls at between 1 and 8 pixels per frame).

Because I wanted to have a lot of objects on screen at the same time the scene had to be regenerated each frame. This required a 5K frame buffer onto which the background and sprites were drawn, the whole thing then being dumped to the display.



I chose a chequer pattern for the floor and ceiling because it gave a sense of solidity while at the same time being repetitive and easy to generate. I started with 16 block images of the floor shifted to different positions. These could then be flipped to give the effect of movement. However, at 1K per image this method was eating up too much memory. After much thought I finally found an efficient solution. Each row of the chequer pattern consisted of equally spaced lines of alternating colour. Because there were 8 pixels in each screen byte, each of these rows could only appear in one of 8 different shifted positions. By defining all these different positions for each row the floor could be generated by effectively shifted each row at a different rate, the ceiling simply being copied as a mirror image of the floor.

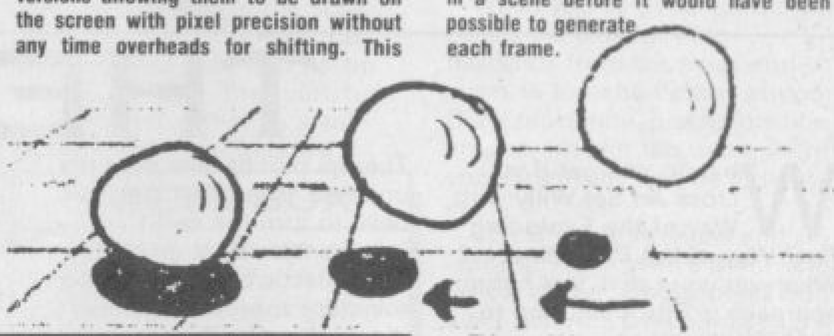
The next problem concerned the images defining the various objects in the scene. Even by limiting the objects to 4 vertical positions and 4 depths into the screen, each object would require 16 masked images. In order to keep everything running fast the images also needed to be stored as 8 different shifted versions allowing them to be drawn on the screen with pixel precision without any time overheads for shifting. This meant each object required 128 masked images. Fortunately a compression technique was discovered whereby each image could be split up into rows and any consecutive repeated rows were deleted.

The image could then be stored as two lists: one giving all the unique rows of the image, the other giving the number of times each row was repeated.

A side effect of this technique was that altering the numbers in the second list allowed the image to be expanded or contracted vertically giving various sizes of image from one set of image data. It did however mean that the objects had to be fairly simple in structure for the compression to have any real effect. Even with all the compression the final program still used about 16K for image data!

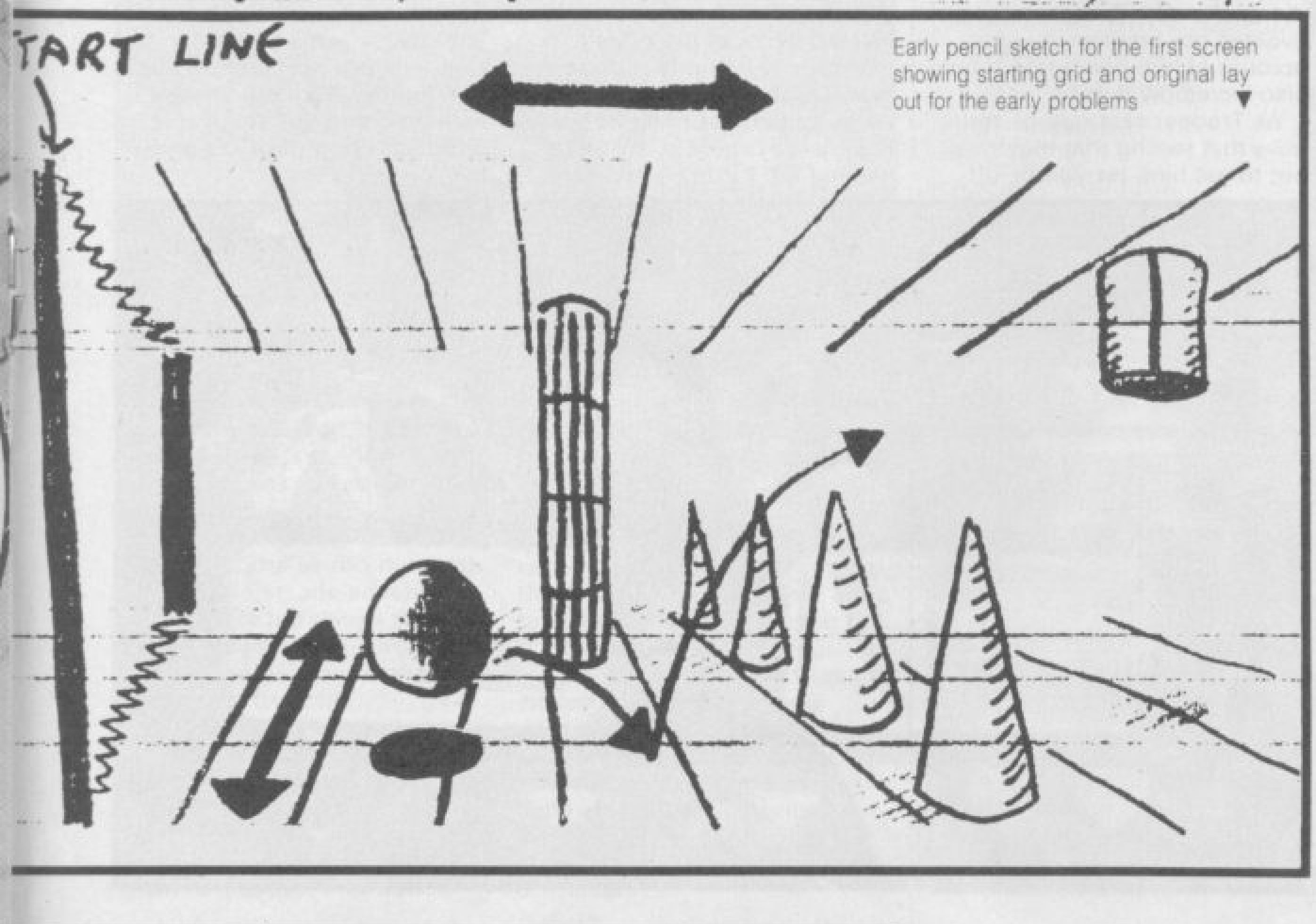
DISPLAYING THE OBJECTS

Actually displaying the objects required some thought about how they would overlap in various situations. Originally I had intended to have some semi-intelligent nasties that would follow you around the corridor but this would have required a priority sort of all the objects in a scene before it would have been possible to generate each frame.



This would have been too time consuming given the number of objects that I wanted to display and so I had to settle for objects which only moved left and right. This meant that all the objects retained the same order of priority to one another irrespective of view and the database could be structured to take this into account.

One feature which had to be changed many times was the shadow under the ball. Originally this was a simple half-tone shape that remained the same size. Unfortunately, the half-toning gave the effect of the shadow floating above the floor rather than being on it. I had to experiment with quite a few different ways of offsetting or contracting the shadow as the ball rose until an acceptable effect was found.



Early pencil sketch for the first screen showing starting grid and original lay out for the early problems ▼

OVERALL EFFECT

On the whole I am pleased with the way the game turned out, especially the feeling of solidity and the speed of movement. The trouble with stretching a machine like the spectrum to its limits in terms of graphics usually means a lot of things have to be left out or a trade-off has to be made between speed, detail and colour. Fortunately, with Impossaball the final game bears a very close resemblance to the original design despite its internal complexity■

John M Phillips

BAZOOKA BILL

FACTS BOX

Rambo a go go. Destruction, death and violence on a big scale. Lots of fun but won't change the world

BAZOOKA BILL
Label: Melbourne House
Author: In house
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: G. L. Taylor

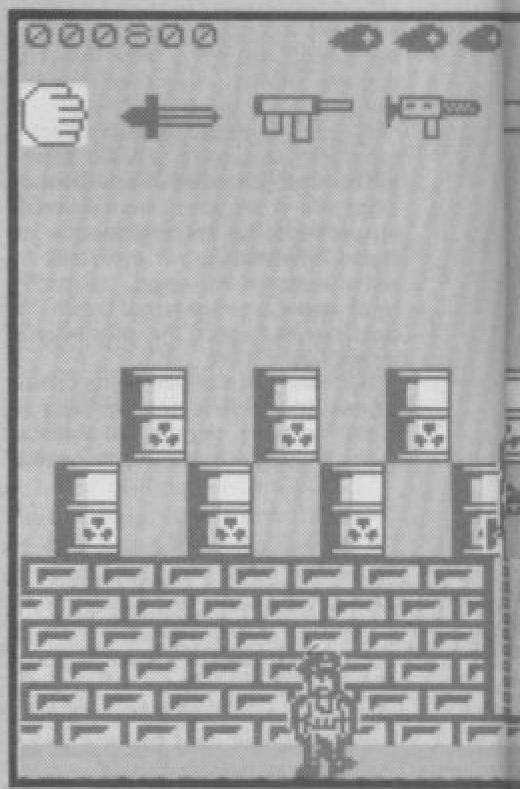
★★★★☆

Bazooka Bill is at least as relentlessly violent as **Rambo** and involves as much running and dodging as **Green Beret**. It adds to these vote winning elements a missile firing Jet Fighter and an exploring element.

So who wants yet another violent game where you kill hundreds of people, climb ladders and jump backwards and forwards? Almost everybody I should think.

There is a plot, considerably more subtle than **Rambo** it is too, you are **Bazooka Bill** a legendary soldier armed only with those weapons you happen to find lying around. Curiously enough, one of these may be a Bazooka. You must fight your way around a series of Islands in the south Pacific seeking and rescueing General Macarthur (the real General MacArthur was a loony who nearly brought the world to nuclear destruction in the Korean War).

You get to fly between islands in a Jet Fighter and move around and through buildings, past walls in front of scenic mountain peaks and between city streets. They aren't tremendously exciting but there



THEY CALL ME

What do you get if you cross **Jet Set Willy** with **Way of the Exploding Fist? Way of the Exploding. . .?** Whatever you call it, this hybrid approach is CRL's solution to the 128K problem.

128K problem? Well, yes, because as all that memory becomes the standard, you have to fill it with something. Call on **Trooper** and he'll do the stuff. Stuck out on the planet Therop in the year 2108, he's sure to have enough problems to use up all those extra bytes.

Brainwashing forms the Theropi plot to take over the universe. Their first step has been to turn the earth representatives at an intergalactic conference into mindless zombies. But they didn't allow for Trooper who avoided the brainwashing on account of him being tough but also incredibly dumb!

As Trooper sets out, he must have that feeling that they're all out to get him. He yomps off across Therop, searching for the bits of his missing spacecraft and renegade Earthlings. There's lots of cliff faces, ledges and an overwhelming feeling of deja vu as he pits himself against the massed perils of the planet.

Despite his mighty muscles, even Trooper can't climb sheer walls, so the first thing he'll require is a rope. Luckily there's one not too far from the start – but there's also a marauding Earthling, which is a definite case of 'Ill met by moonlight'!

Suddenly the scene flips and we're into **Fist**-country as Trooper takes on traitor! If you've not seen enough bash-'em-ups to last a lifetime in the ring, this is a pretty good one. The figures are large and well animated and you're given a good selection of blows and leaps.

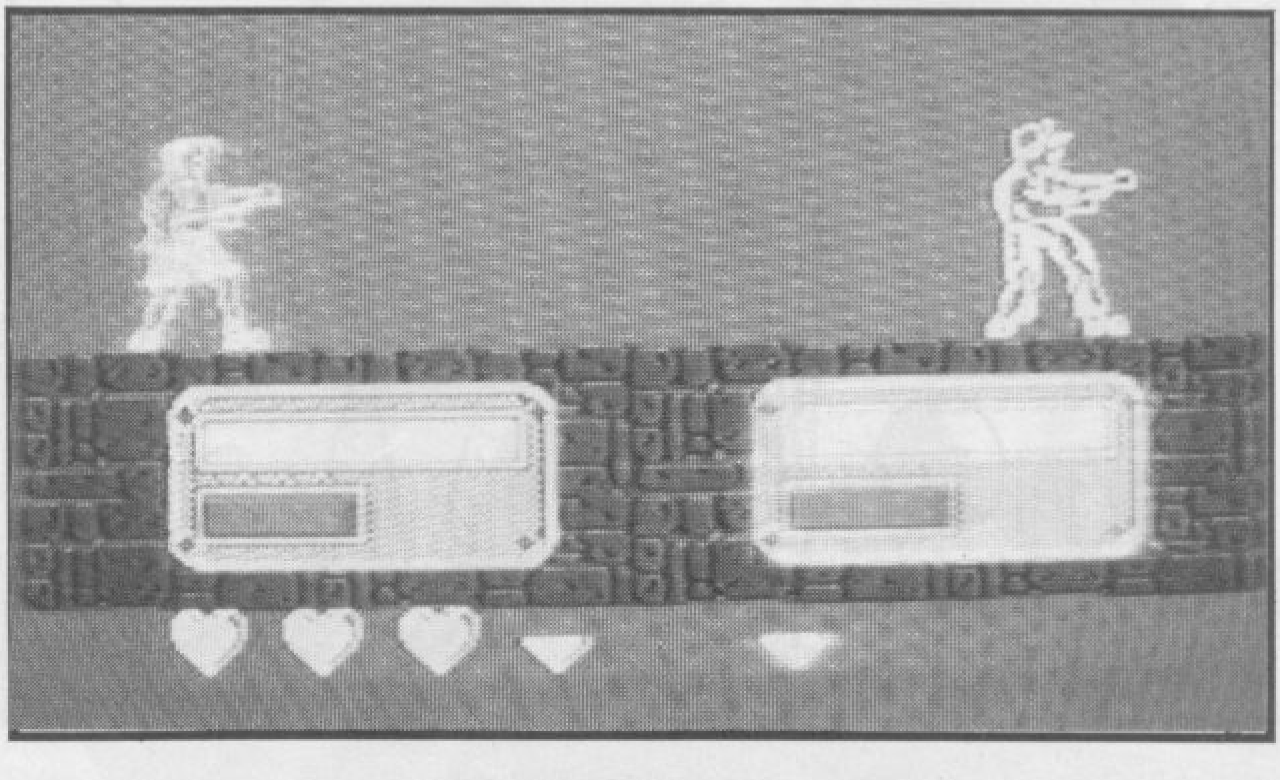
FACTS BOX

Arcade adventure meets martial arts and falls between two stools in an interesting experiement

THEY CALL ME TROOPER
Label: CRL
Author:
Price: £8.95
Memory: 128K
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor

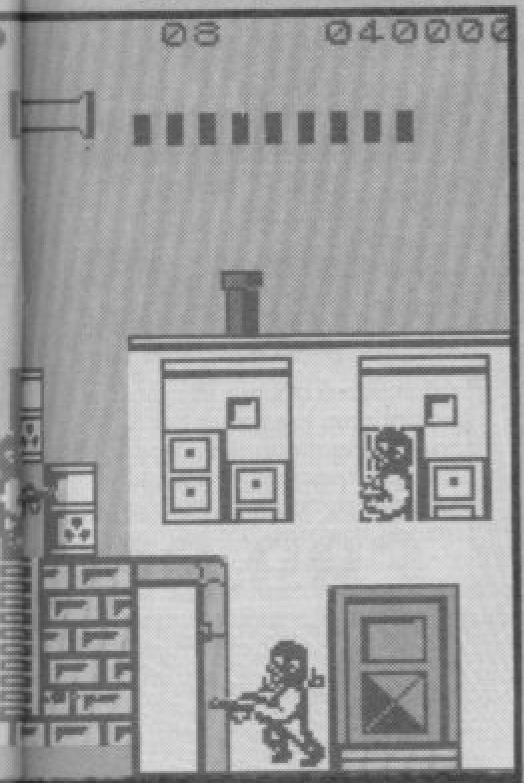
Reviewer: Jerry Muir

★★★☆☆



is more variety here than in the competition.

The graphics are odd, there are various ways of doing sprites which (not being technical) I would characterise as being either not-attribute-clashing-much-but-kind-of-translucent-looking or solid-looking-but-changing-colour-horrendously, the sprites here are somewhere between the two ie a bit transulcent and a bit colour clashing. Nothing beats **Dan Dare** or **Dynamite Dan II** for graphics in this style of game yet.

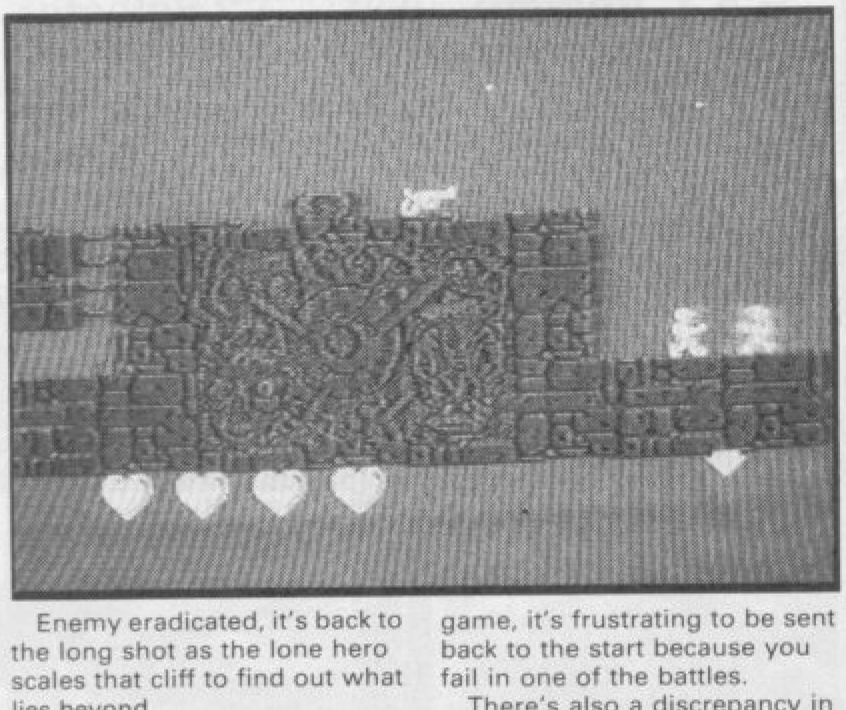


Anyway, if you should ever get tired of killing people there are large numbers of less squidgy objects for you to blast including tanks and trucks. Here's a handy tip: you won't take out a tank if only armed with a knife. This is software verité.

In terms of variety at least **Bazooka** may actually be better than the competition, even if you've been killing the guys in **Rambo** you'll want to kill even more of them in **Bazooka Bill**.

It isn't a game that filled me with much joy mainly because there isn't actually anything new in it either themewise or programmingwise but it ought to do well■

TROOPER



Enemy eradicated, it's back to the long shot as the lone hero scales that cliff to find out what lies beyond.

And what lies beyond shouldn't come as too much of a surprise to arcade-adventure addits. There are things to dodge, including the Teropi, who resemble flying lemons, and ladders to climb.

Trooper wasn't a particularly bad idea – but it wasn't a particularly good one, either. While the two levels of play manage to give the combat a narrative, and add a tougher touch to a collect-and-dodge game, it's frustrating to be sent back to the start because you fail in one of the battles.

There's also a discrepancy in style between the parts, so that while the fights are rather nice, the graphics of the planet are a bit disappointing, with their tiny figures.

Any company which tries to exploit the larger memory deserves some praise, but this is surely only the first faltering step towards much more sophisticated adventures. Sadly, **Trooper** belongs in the ranks and not among the officers■

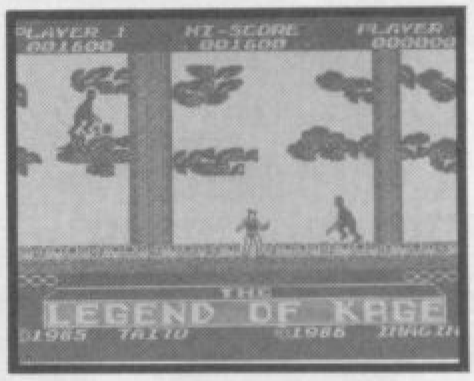
ARCADE REVIEW

LEGEND OF KAGE

Mushy, lovey-dovey stuff this. Kage, the hero of our legend, takes Kiri, his latest girl, for a walk in the beautiful oriental forest. The trees are tall, the mould is green and the Dragon King comes along in his carriage to kidnap her.

The King disappears and you're left on the screen of this Taito coin-op conversion to take care of his ten Nijas. These warriors swing in from both sides of the screen, brandishing Stiletto knives and Shirukens – silver throwing stars which do damage to flesh.

Pretty standard stuff so far. The bad news is it gets worse. Even a luke-warm arcade player could beat the Ninjas and Dragon King on all four games screens. The techniques you use are almost entirely obvious when you first look at each screen.



In the first, for instance, wait in the middle of the screen until two Ninjas swing down at you. As they swing closer together move to one side of the screen or another, under one of the Ninjas so that they end up on your left or right. Then run, turn suddenly when they're a safe distance from you and fire some Shirkens.

The Ninjas will all fall fairly easily.

When you've polished off the Ninjas the Dragon King descends from the trees and starts to breathe flames at you. Don't touch him, just follow him around, hit him ten times with your Shirukens and he'll die easily enough.

Screen three is levels and ladders. The screen's a horrible yellow colour, emblazoned with black patterns which makes it almost impossible to see any attacking Ninjas.

If you reach the fourth level – not difficult by any standards – you'll have a good chance of rescuing Kiri from the talons of the Dragon King. She's hidden on the top floor of the King's gaudy palace and, yet again, you've got to defeat her guards and release her after you've killed the Dragon King.

Not the most difficult Taito coin op converted by Imagine into not the most difficult game on the planet...■

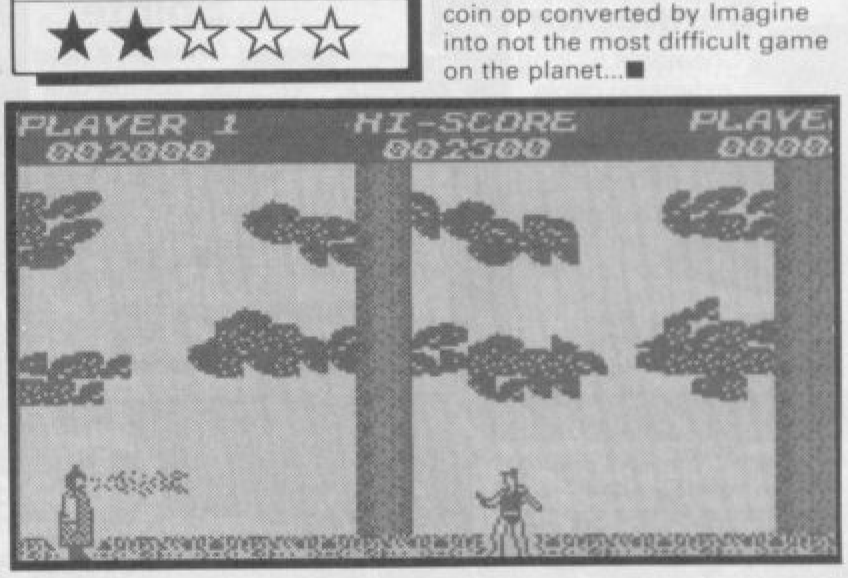
FACTS BOX

Pedestrian coin-op conversion of a fairly old game. Take your Shirukens to the three tops to defeat the colour clash

LEGEND OF KAGE
Label: Imagine
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: John Gilbert

★★☆☆☆




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SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC

STRATEGY SIMULATION REVIEW

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

Mine's called Fido but he doesn't seem to care. Fido is my **Little Computer Person**. I found him in our Spectrum – the one with the wobbly interface – maybe the rent was lower.

I talk to Fido, I ask him to write me a letter and he does. It is complete drivel. He rambles on and on about how happy he is in his new computer home and how much he likes his dog. He's the sort of person you'd avoid at parties.

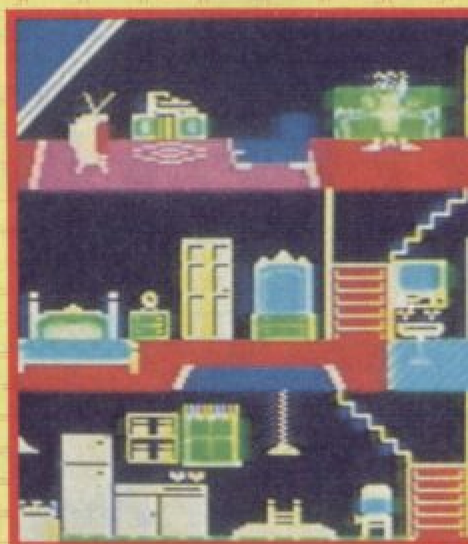
You can pet Fido when he sits in his petting chair, extending a little hand out which pats his head. You can give him presents of books and records. You can play simple card games with him you can keep him well fed and watered. You can be kind and treat him as your own little friend. Or not.

If you are unkind your little computer man starts to suffer. At first he types you plaintive little letters gently suggesting that he is a little hungry. Wait a little longer and the letters become more desperate, more pleading. Eventually your little man retires to bed and turns green, he refuses to do what you ask and looks generally as though he's downed one vindaloo too many.

Little Computer People is American. This will come as no surprise since the whole thing is, in one way, a computer equivalent of Cabbage Patch Dolls over which mid-western housewifes drew blood. The thing is, despite being desperately twee in places, **Little Computer People** is also unique, very well programmed and – in the short term at least – utterly captivating.

It will only work on the 128K Spectrum, the original was a disc-based exercise on the Commodore. This means two things: firstly, the Spectrum 128K version takes ages and ages to load, and secondly some of the features of the game which were especially clever on the Commodore used the instant access disc provided. For example, the beginning of the game is a 'moving in' sequence where the computer man 'arrives' at your computer and wanders around aimlessly looking at his new home. This only ever happens once on the Commodore if you want to avoid it you have to *Save* the game on tape

Fido is also naked on the Spectrum. Because otherwise different coloured bits of him would create wonderful attribute problems. It's something I can live with. I'm broadminded. The programming is still pretty remarkable. It's the attention to detail that makes the program. You set up a clock at the beginning of play (?) and a clock in the Little Computer Person's house keeps regular time from then on. The record player actually looks like it's going round and round, Fido can nod, do aerobics, walk around, look happy, sad or indifferent, watch the television (which flickers and, judging by the sound, shows very violent programmes), play some simple games or play with a computer. He can even go to the bog and take a shower (shielded from one's gaze fortunately).

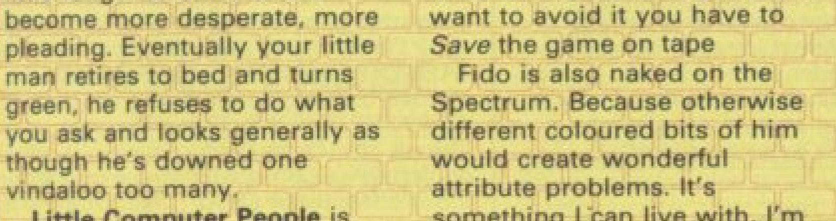


Sound is another key part of the program, important enough to mean that even if this program could be reduced to 48K it wouldn't be worth playing without a decent sound chip to similate Fido playing the piano or playing records. Fido's taste in music leaves quite a lot to be desired and I recall with envy a **Little Computer Person** on the Commodore you used to play bizarre electro heavy metal. Music is not the only reason for sound, sound effects of various kinds add greatly to the sense of detail in the program. For example Fido's footsteps are different depending on whether he is walking across carpet (fump, fump) or linoleum (eep, eep).

Fido also talks – a strange language made up of bleeps and whistles, heard when Fido chats on the phone (but to whom?) I spotted one bug though – he keeps chatting even after he puts the phone down – a sure sign of insanity.

This is an excellent conversion, and even though much of the cutesyness of the idea irritates me, it's so well done that I think **Little Computer People** is a genuine and important step forward in artificial intelligence.

Oh yeah, in the end I just couldn't bring myself to kill Fido – after he failed to respond to my suggestion that he eat the dog I fed him■



FACTS BOX

An incredible programming achievement, you'll come closer to actually believing than you can possibly imagine

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE

Label: Activision
Author: David Crane
Price: £9.99
Memory: 128K only

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★★

TASWORD 128

TASWORD THREE

TASWORD PLUS TWO



Buy a Tasword for your Spectrum and get a word processing program that is:

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ZX SPECTRUM
TASWORD TWO
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD TWO for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £13.90 microdrive cartridge £15.40

"Without doubt the best utility I have reviewed for the Spectrum"
HOME COMPUTING WEEKLY APRIL 1984
"If you have been looking for a word processor, then look no further" *CRASH JUNE 1984*
With 64 characters per line on the screen and a host of useful features TASWORD TWO is the ideal cassette based word processing package for the Spectrum owner.

TASPRINT
THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £9.90 microdrive cartridge £11.40

A must for dot matrix printer owners! Print your program output and listings in a choice of five impressive print styles. TASPRINT utilises the graphics capabilities of dot matrix printers to form, with a double pass of the printhead, output in a range of five fonts varying from the futuristic Data-Run to the hand writing simulation of Palace Script. A TASPRINT gives your output originality and style! The TASPRINT fonts are shown to the right together with a list of compatible printers.

TASCOPY
THE SCREEN COPIER

TASCOPY for the ZX Spectrum with Interface 1 cassette £9.90 microdrive cartridge £11.40

The Spectrum TASCOPY is for use with the RS232 output on ZX Interface 1. It produces both monochrome (in a choice of two sizes) and large copies in which the different screen colours are printed as different shades. With TASCOPY you can keep a permanent and impressive record of your screen pictures and diagrams. A list of printers supported by TASCOPY is given to the left.

TAS-DIARY
THE ELECTRONIC DIARY

TAS-DIARY for the ZX 48K Spectrum and microdrives. Cassette £9.90

Keep an electronic day-to-day diary on microdrive! TAS-DIARY includes a clock, calendar, and a separate screen display for every day of the year. Invaluable for reminders, appointments, and for keeping a record of your day. The data for each month is stored as a separate microdrive file so that your data for a year is only constrained by the microdrive capacity. TAS-DIARY will work for this year, next year, and every year up to 2100! Supplied on cassette for automatic transfer to microdrive.

TASMAN PRINTER
INTERFACE

TASPRINT PRINTER INTERFACE for the ZX Spectrum £29.90
RS232 Cable for ZX Interface 1 £14.50

Plug into your Spectrum and drive any printer fitted with the Centronics standard parallel interface. Supplied complete with ribbon cable and driving software. The user changeable interface software makes it easy to send control codes to your printer using the method so successfully pioneered with TASWORD TWO. The cassette contains fast machine code high resolution full width SCREEN COPY SOFTWARE for Epson, Mannesmann Tally, Shinwa, Star, Tandy Colour Graphic (in colour!) printers. TASCOPY shaded screen copy software for this interface (value £9.90) is INCLUDED in this package.

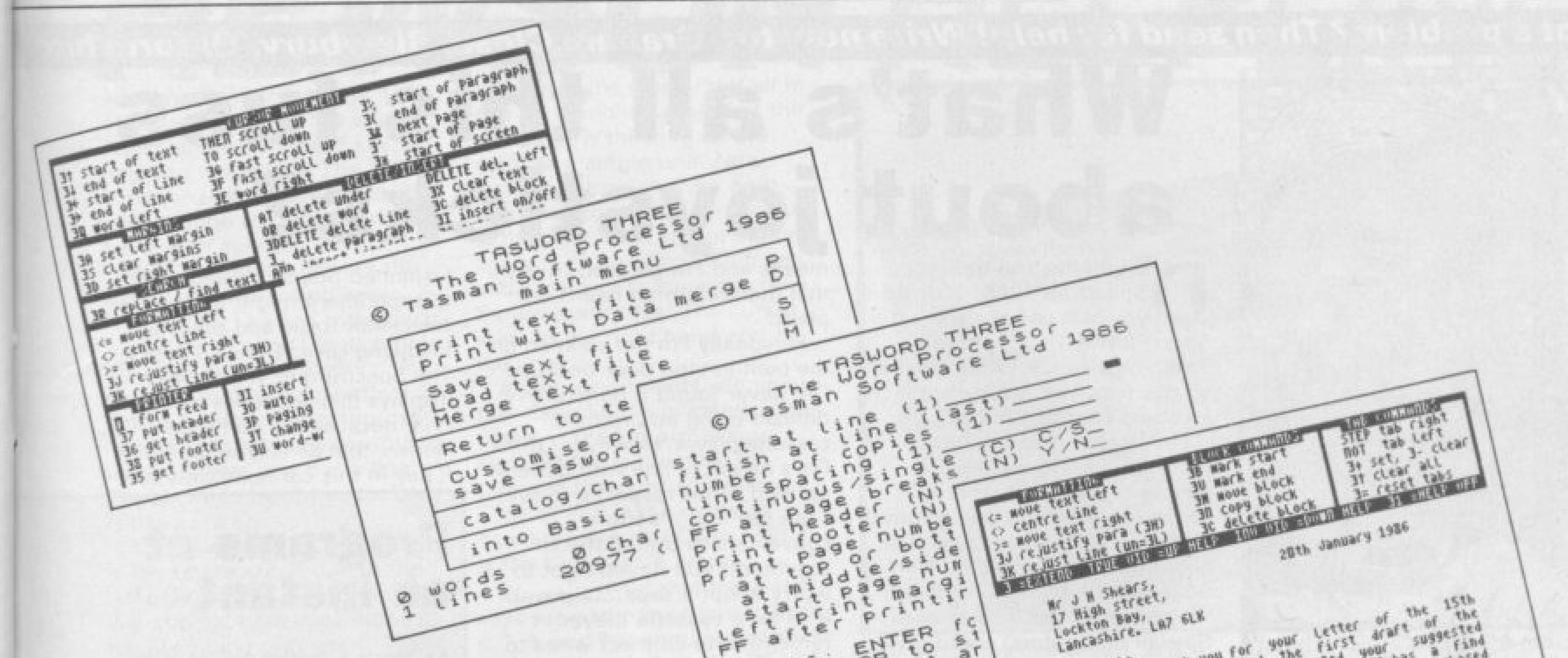
The TASCOPIES and TASPRINTS drive all Epson compatible eight pin dot-matrix printers e.g.

		BROTHER M1009
AMSTRAD DMP2000	NEC PC8023B-N	BROTHER HR5
EPSON FX-80	MANNESMANN TALLY MT-80	SHINWA CP-80
EPSON RX-80	STAR DMP501/515/5610	DATAC PANTHER
EPSON MX-80 TYPE III	COSMOS-80	DATAC PANTHER II

COMPACTA - bold and heavy, good for emphasis
DATA-RUN - A FUTURISTIC SCRIPT
LECTURA LIGHT - clean and pleasing to read
MEDIAN - a serious business-like script
PALACE SCRIPT - a distinctive flowing font

TASPRINT output shown at less than half-size.





THE TASWORD WORD PROCESSORS:–

TASWORD THREE – *for the ZX 48K Spectrum – Microdrive £16.50*

TASWORD 128 – *for the ZX Spectrum 128 – Cassette £13.90*

TASWORD PLUS TWO – *for the ZX Spectrum + 2 – Cassette £13.90*

TASWIDE
THE SCREEN STRETCHER

TASWIDE for the ZX 48K Spectrum cassette £5.50

With this machine code utility you can write your own Basic programs that will, with normal PRINT statements, print onto the screen in the compact lettering used by TASWORD TWO. With TASWIDE you can double the information shown on the screen!

TASWORD THREE
FOR OPUS DISCOVERY

*A special version of TASWORD THREE for the Opus Discovery disc drive. Disc **£19.50***

ZX SPECTRUM 128
TASWORD 128
THE WORD PROCESSOR

TASWORD 128 for the ZX Spectrum 128 cassette £13.90

TASWORD 128 has been especially developed to use the additional memory of the 128K Spectrum. This gives text files that are over 60K long – this is about ten thousand words! TASWORD 128 has all the features of TASWORD THREE (mail merge only when transferred to microdrive). TASWORD 128 is supplied on, and will run on, cassette. TASWORD 128 is also readily transferred to microdrive by following instructions supplied with the program.

SINCLAIR QL
QL is a trademark of Sinclair Research Ltd

TASCOPY QL
THE SCREEN COPIER

TASCOPY QL for the Sinclair QL microdrive cartridge £12.90

TASCOPY QL adds new commands to QL Superbasic. Execute these commands to print a shaded copy of the screen. Print the entire screen or just a specified window. TASCOPY QL also produces large "poster size" screen copies on more than one sheet of paper which can be cut and joined to make the poster.

TASPRINT QL
THE STYLE WRITER

TASPRINT QL for the Sinclair QL microdrive cartridge £19.95

TASPRINT QL includes a screen editor used to modify files created by other programs, such as QUILL, or by the user from Basic. These modified files include TASPRINT control characters and may be printed, using TASPRINT, in one or more of the unique TASPRINT fonts.

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What's all this fuss about joysticks?

Do you like the new Spectrum 128K+2 or do you still use the old Spectrum? asks Jonathan Smith of Newbury. **And what is all this fuss about different joysticks for the 128K+2?**

I'm a convert to the new machine and no mistake. A couple of months before it came out I wrote in this column that a good keyboard was just about the best thing that Alan Sugar (he be boss of Amstrad, the company that now makes Sinclair computers) could give us. I wasn't the only person to grumble about the old Spectrum keyboard by any means and I'm pleased to say that the great man heard our pleas.

Personally I'm not so keen on the built-in tape deck because I've never found it particularly difficult using an ordinary cassette player. However I think I'm a bit out of line with general opinion in this respect and even I can see that it's more convenient to put all the kit together if you haven't got to worry about a separate power lead for a cassette player or remember to connect wires to *Ear* and *Mic* sockets.

I think the re-introduction of the boring old Sinclair joystick standard was a bit unnecessary(!) and it is bound to lead to confusion. For those readers who don't know, the two joystick ports are 'mapped', to use the technical term, on to the top row of the keyboard. This means that if you plug an Amstrad joystick into one of the sockets on the side of the machine and move it up/down/left/right or press the *Fire* button you have the same effect as pressing one of the keys on the top row. (Further, if you want to connect a non-Amstrad joystick you'll need an adaptor lead – see later on in this piece).

If you think about it you can see that there are five basic joystick actions up, down, left, right and *Fire*. From Port 1 these five actions are mapped on to keys 6, 7, 8, 9 and 0. From Port 2 the actions are mapped on to keys 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The problem with this arrangement is that way back in the dim and distant past when the Spectrum was first invented the "arrow keys" were also mapped on to some of the keys on the top row and little arrows were printed on the keys in addition to the appropriate numbers. In fact the original Spectrum was a veritable jungle of keys and symbols with as many as five different symbols on each key. The effect of any given key depended on the context in which it was pressed and on the sequence of *Caps Shift* and *Symbol Shift* keys pressed before and/or simultaneously with the key in question.

When creating the 128K+2 the manufacturers did away with almost all of the extra symbols because they are not all that relevant to 128 Basic. Those 128K+2 owners who have never seen or used an old fashioned Spectrum and want to experiment might like to select 48K Basic and press the following keys: 1, then 0 then P. The Spectrum in 48K mode displays this sequence as: 10 *Print* because the computer 'knows' that when you press the P Key in this context that you

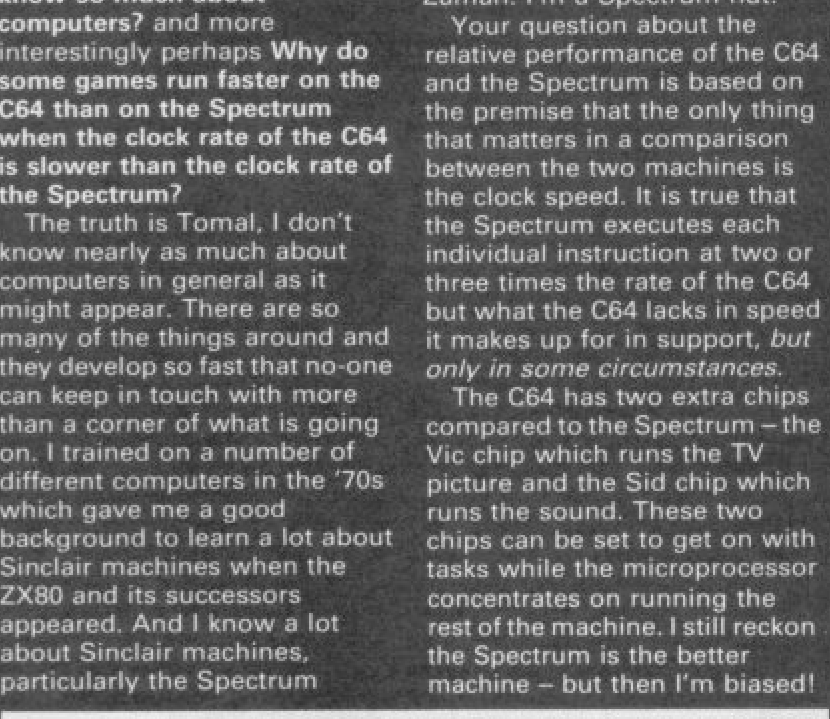
More haste less speed

Tomal Zaman from Pakistan contributes an international flavour to the *Help Line* this month and wins a copy of **Uridium** for his efforts asking a number of questions including **How did you get to know so much about computers?** and more interestingly perhaps **Why do some games run faster on the C64 than on the Spectrum when the clock rate of the C64 is slower than the clock rate of the Spectrum?**

The truth is Tomal, I don't know nearly as much about computers in general as it might appear. There are so many of the things around and they develop so fast that no-one can keep in touch with more than a corner of what is going on. I trained on a number of different computers in the '70s which gave me a good background to learn a lot about Sinclair machines when the ZX80 and its successors appeared. And I know a lot about Sinclair machines, particularly the Spectrum because I've been lucky enough to spend many happy hours testing, programming, fiddling and playing with the things. And in between I've read a lot of what has been written about them too. In summary, Mr Zaman. I'm a Spectrum nut.

Your question about the relative performance of the C64 and the Spectrum is based on the premise that the only thing that matters in a comparison between the two machines is the clock speed. It is true that the Spectrum executes each individual instruction at two or three times the rate of the C64 but what the C64 lacks in speed it makes up for in support, *but only in some circumstances.*

The C64 has two extra chips compared to the Spectrum – the Vic chip which runs the TV picture and the Sid chip which runs the sound. These two chips can be set to get on with tasks while the microprocessor concentrates on running the rest of the machine. I still reckon the Spectrum is the better machine – but then I'm biased!



Programs at an instant

Is there a device for 'reading' printed programs such as those featured in program printout? asks James Kelleher of Dublin. **After seeing the length of *'Crisis at Christmas'* I feel I need one!**

'Fraid not, James. There are specialised optical readers (like the Omnireader) which can read text but the letters have to be constructed in an unusual manner to form a character set which we humans find rather hard to read. A good example is the strange looking letters and numbers found on the bottom of a cheque. I think you would object if your copy of SU was printed entirely in this form.

Rom for one on top

I want to do some calculations in a machine-code program. Is it possible to make use of the Rom to help? asks Peter Townsend of Middlesborough.

It's most easily understood by way of an example. Suppose we want to subtract the Basic variable *B* from the Basic variable *A* and to *Print* the result. In other words we wish to execute the following Basic statement in a machine-code program: *Print* A-B

The steps are as follows:

- Use a Rom routine called *Lookvar* to locate variable *B* the Basic variable area.
- Transfer the value of *B* to the calculator stack using the Rom routine called *Intstor*.
- Find the variable *A* in the Basic variables area using *Lookvar*.
- Transfer the value of *A* to the calculator stack using *Intstor*.
- Call the Rom calculator using RST 28h and follow the instruction by a byte containing

HEWSON HELPLINE

want the *Print* command. The old Spectrums had the word *Print* stamped on the *P* key to help you remember. The 128K+2 machines still have the facility even though the extra symbols have been deleted.

Now, continue entering the Basic line by pressing keys: ",A,B,C,D,". The line will appear as: 10 *Print* "abcd" Notice how the letter keys have now reverted to their usual effect. This is because the computer 'knows' that only one command word appears in a Basic line. The command word in this case is the word *Print*.

Now press the left arrow key, ie the key next but one to the left of the space bar. The cursor will skip back letter by letter to the beginning of the line. There is nothing surprising about this except perhaps that the cursor skips over the word *Print* all in one go demonstrating that the computer is thinking of the word as a single unit. Now, instead of pressing the right arrow key to get the cursor back to the right hand end of the line again press the *Caps Shift* key and the 8 key at the same time. Surprise, surprise! The cursor skips to the right hand end of the line.

A few experiments will show that *Caps Shift* 5 is identical to pressing the left arrow key. *Caps Shift* 8 is identical to pressing the right arrow key. *Caps Shift* 6 is the same as down arrown and *Caps Shift* 7 is the same as up arrow.

We've proved that the arrow keys are not mapped on to keys 6, 7, 8, and 9 to simulate joystick Port 1 with key 0 as the *"Fire"* key. Nor are they mapped on to



four out of the five keys 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to stimulate joystick Port 2. No. Instead they're mapped on to keys 5, 6, 7 and 8, carefully straddling the two joystick port maps. This is confusing to say the least.

It is particularly confusing because the 128K+2 is the only version of the Spectrum released to date which can have a joystick plugged straight into it. All the earlier machines had to have a little black box, called an interface, which the joystick plugged into and which in turn plugged into the edge connector at the rear of the machine. These black boxes were and are made by a number of different manufacturers and there are two ways of making the connections which have gained widespread acceptance.

One way is called the Kempston standard after the company which pioneered it. In this standard the joystick is completely independent of the keyboard and must be read using an *In* 31 command. I wrote about how to do this in machine code a couple of months ago. The other way is for the joystick to simulate the effect of pressing, yes, you've guessed it, an arrow key.

So Amstrad has re-introduced a *third* way of running a joystick from the Spectrum. (I say re-introduced because Sinclair had a bash at it several years ago with very little success.) No doubt this is great fun for the manufacturers but it shows precious little respect for the poor long sufferin' user.

And, to compound the problem Amstrad has carefully wired up joystick connections differently from anyone else. This, it seems to me, is particularly dangerous because it means that if you plug a non-Sinclair joystick into the 128K+2 port connections you risk damaging your machine. Amstrad has done this despite the fact that it has new sockets which look identical to everyone else's.

It's fairly easy of course to construct a joystick plug which switches the connections around in the right way and I know of at least one firm (Cheetah) which is selling an appropriate widget to do the job. Nevertheless it's very annoying to say the least that wrong. So be warned:

● *Don't plug a non-Sinclair joystick directly in to the 128K+2*

● Don't plug a Sinclair joystick directly into a Spectrum

Protecting your product

My thanks to Philip Dobson of Bristol who writes: **Some of the advice you have given to potential software authors on copyright protection is wrong! It is not sufficient to mail yourself a letter or package containing the program cassette with the intention of using the date stamp as proof of existence of the program at some particular date because it is possible to obtain such a date stamp on an unsealed envelope and to seal the envelope later!**

Apologies to Philip and to everyone else. I have rechecked my sources as result of your letter and you are quite right and I am wrong. It would appear that the only way to establish the existence of the program at a certain date is to deposit a copy on that date with a reputable organisation. I have suggested a solicitor or bank and Mr Dobsom suggests the copyright Section of the Institution of Analyst and Programmers (01-898 2385).

03h which is the code for subtraction and a byte containing 38h which is the code to end calculation.

● *Print* the value on the top of the calculator stack using the routine *FPrint*.

Some of the routines which can be used to manipulate numbers on the stack are named and described in Table 1 together with their address in the Spectrum Rom.

A stack system is very flexible because any number of items, up to the limit of the size of the stack, can be manipulated in one operation.

Similarly any number of operations can be strung together. For instance if you wanted to divide one number by a second, multiply by a third and then find the square root of the result it would only be necessary to place the numbers on the line stack in the right order and then call the calculator with the codes for division (05h), multiplication (04h) and square root (28h) followed by the termination code (38h)■

Routine	Dec	Hex	Function
EXPTNUM	**7290**	**1CO2**	**Evaluate in part the numerical expression currently pointed to by *CHADD*. During syntax-time the routine confirms the presence of a valid numerical expression. In run-time it places the evaluated expression on to the calculator stack, to be fetched by *STKTOA* or STKTOBC**
EXPT2NM	**7290**	**1C7A**	**As for *EXPTNUM* but searches for two numbers separated by a comma**
NEXT2NM	**7289**	**1C79**	**CHADD is incremented before jumping to *EXPT2NM***
EXPTSTG	**7308**	**1C8C**	**Performs a similar function to *EXPTNUM* except that a string is expected rather than a number**
STKTOA	**7828**	**1E94**	**Fetches the last value from the calculator stack and compresses it into the *A* register**
STKTOBC	**7833**	**1E99**	**Compresses the last value on the calculator stack into the *BC* register pair**
STKFTCH	**11249**	**2BF1**	**Fetches the various parameters relating to the last string entry on the stack. *DE* points to the first character of the string whilst *BC* holds the length of the string**
LOOKVAR	**10418**	**28B2**	**A search of the variables area is made for the variable whose name is currently pointed to be *CHADD*. If the variable is found, the carry flag is reset and *HL* returns pointing to the last letter in the variable name: otherwise the carry flag is set and *HL* will point to the first letter of the name**
INTSTOR	**11660**	**2DBC**	**On the entry *HL* points to the first of five locations whose contents are to be stored on the calculator stack**
STACKBC	**11563**	**2D2B**	**The number currently held in *BC* is stacked in floating – points form**
FPPRINT	**11747**	**sDE3**	**Prints the last value on the calculator stack. Calling *STACKBC* and then *FPPRINT* provides an easy method of printing any 16-bit number**

Table 1 A list at Rom routines which are of use when using the Spectrum Calculator, together with their entry points

AGENT ORANGE

I'm still not exactly sure what to make of **Agent Orange.** OK, it's got a completely lousy title, but it's quite original plot-wise, and it plays very well. Well, while I'm making up my mind, see what you think of the 'concept' (man).

Three generations after the Battle of Britain, dogfights of a far larger magnitude are raging on planets all across the solar system. Having exhausted much of Earth's crops, and in an ever-progressive system, whole worlds are exploited for their growth/enducing environments. They're turned into huge greenhouses on which crops are planted, grown and harvested.

Policing these places is a big headache, as is simply moving the crops in order to sell them. As a result, a new industry was born. The workers have long hours, poor conditions and little incentive other than the money they can make by importing crops from dangerous areas and maybe ridding the galaxy of a few alien parasites.

The trouble with these aliens, though, is that they just seem to decide that any planet is their own, and can plant their own crops on land which you have already claimed. Obviously this is not on, and will have to be dealt with.

OK. That's the story. You are a Flying Farmer – as they are known – and have the job of planting and harvesting crops, and dealing with the aliens.

Once you've decided which options to select (joystick/redefined keys etc) you enter the game proper. The screen swishes open to reveal the mothership and your tiny hovvery thing on the launch pad. Off you go over miles and





FACTS BOX

Love-it-or-hate it style strategy-blast with a bit of ecology thrown in for good measure. Highly innovative storyline

AGENT ORANGE
Label: A'N'F
Author: in-house
Joystick: various
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: [signature]

★★★★☆

JAILBREAK

Jail Break is the first convertion of an arcade game attempted by coin-op kings Konami all by itself. Past form has always been to do the games via licences with the likes of Imagine.

With a few ifs and buts I'd say its first solo outing is a big success. Better, mostly, than the usual standard of the Imagine licenced deals.

You're a lone American cop with strange legs and a nifty peaked cap. And what with the hoards of criminals making a break for it from The State Pen you're kept pretty busy. Them and their hostages assorted men, women, children and wardens who it's best not to kill. (Occasionally, well pretty often actually, they *are* called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice for an orderly society and you'll just have to kill them).

If instead of killing a hostage you manage to actually rescue one you are rewarded not only with a warm glow and plenty of bonus points but a handy tool like a bazooka or a tear gas gun. The three types of weapons – standard pistol, bazooka and tear gas gun – are all necessary at different times to achieve different tasks.

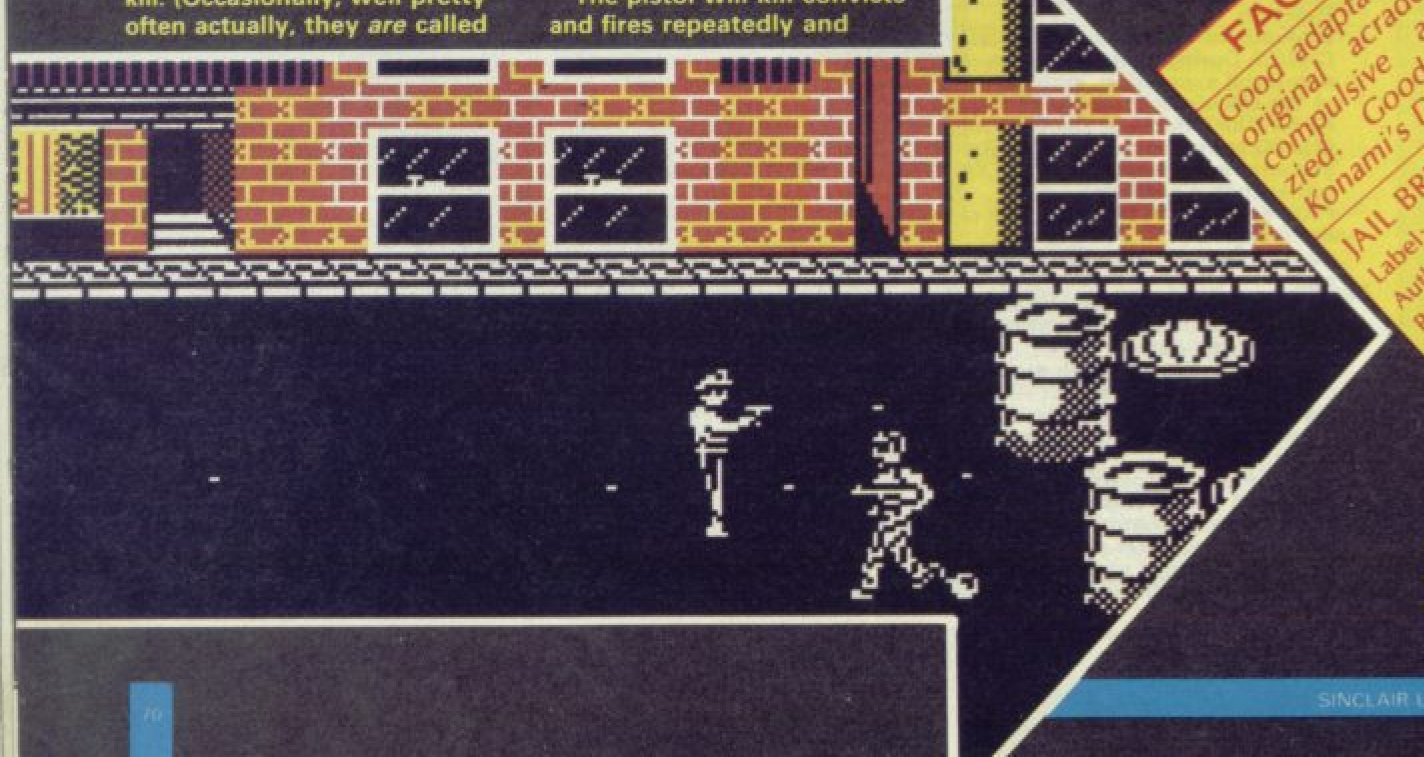
The pistol will kill convicts and fires repeatedly and quickly.

The bazooka will knock out almost everything including the barrels the convicts have placed to block your way.

And the tear gas gun deals with people for one reason or another immune to bullets like the skeleton in the first section.

Convicts come in two main types, those with guns and those with what may be either bricks or bottles (I'm not sure which). Guns must just be avoided carefully – these convicts run in approximately straight lines (though the bullets sometimes seem to curve mysteriously). Brick-wielding baddies are much more tricky – they run straight for you in an act of mindless agression. Don't try to reason with them.





FACTS BOX

Good adaptation of the original acrade game, compulsive and frenzied. Good start for Konami's DIY approach

JAIL BREAK
Label: Konami
Author: in-house
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: [signature]

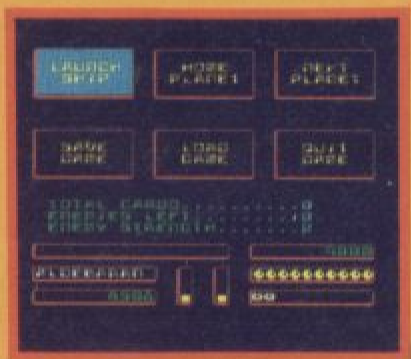
★★★★★

miles of monochrome landscape, which apparently is only a few metres wide – you can't go up or down. Now you will have a full tank of seeds that need planting. Trying to plant these on machinery and weedy areas is pretty stupid. Instead, you've got to find some ground that hasn't been attacked or built on.

As you fly low over the surface, hold down the *Fire* button and your pods of seeds will be shot into the ground. Soon they'll start to grow into little cubes of colour.

Of course, the aliens are doing exactly the same thing with their crops, and it's up to you to stop it. Alien craft fly around and take pot shots at you now and again. These can, at least on the early levels, be picked off very easily. Once you've killed one, they will explode in a puff of white smoke. Miraculously his cargo of seeds makes it through the explosion and will lie, invitingly, on the ground. All you have to do is fly over the pod and collect it.

Alien seeds overrun your own potential growing areas and must be removed by flying at low level and firing continuously. Having dealt with a couple of aliens and blown away most of their crops, some of your seeds (remember we



planted some a couple of paragraphs back) should have turned green, signifying their readiness to be harvested. Harvesting is a doddle. Just fly over the crops and watch your cargo gauge begin to fill.

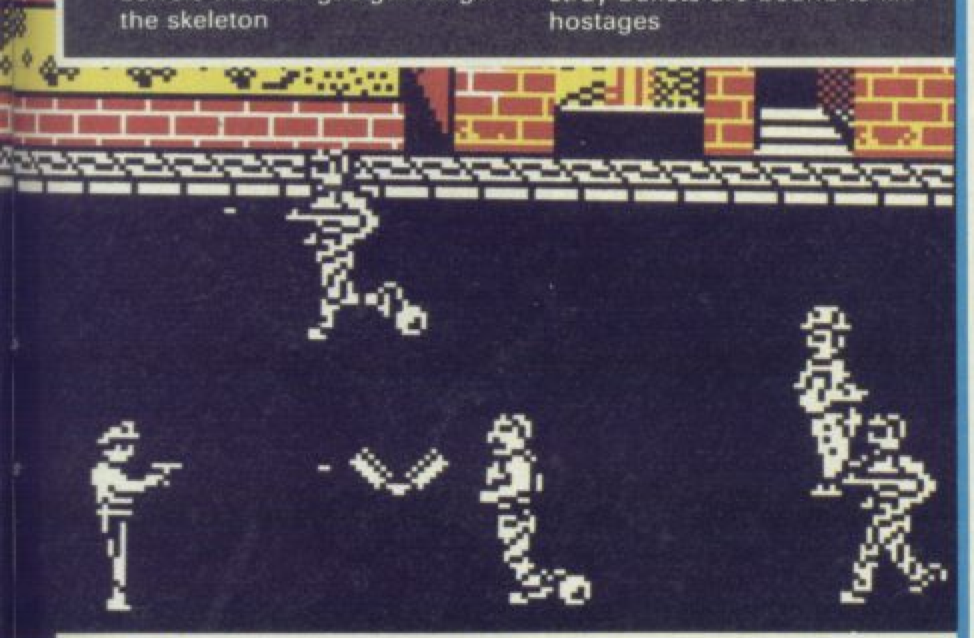
Once you've stocked up on crops, it's back to the mothership and off to another planet.

Crops can be converted to money in order to buy a more heavily defended ship. This will come in handy in later stages when the baddies develop tougher hulls.

And that's just about the measure of it. The graphics are rather nice, it's all rather original, and there's some genuine strategy involved; should you concentrate on harvesting your ripe crops or try to deal with the spreading alien vegetation? Not so much kill, kill, kill as sow, harvest, sell and kill a bit■

HINTS AND TIPS

- Kill bomb throwers the moment you see them. You won't get a second chance
- You need a bazooka to blast barrels the tear gas gun to get the skeleton
- Blast the convicts in the manholes before trying to get past them
- Even approaching near a convict can kill you
- Try to fire at specific targets, stray bullets are bound to kill hostages



I'd say the game was pitched at just about the right level of difficulty. The first couple of times you die immediately and yell 'fix!' Then you survive a minute and finally you start surviving for several minutes at a time.

Graphically the game looks good. Fair sized sprites for cop and convicts, goodish background detail, smooth movement (mostly).

Bad points? Well the screen scroll is very jerky and sometimes you bite the dust for reasons that do not seem entirely fair – just passing within feet of a convict sometimes kills you and generally there is something peculiar about the perspectives.

Jail Break is a good start for Konami. A better than average conversion that tops the mindless violence league for the year so far■

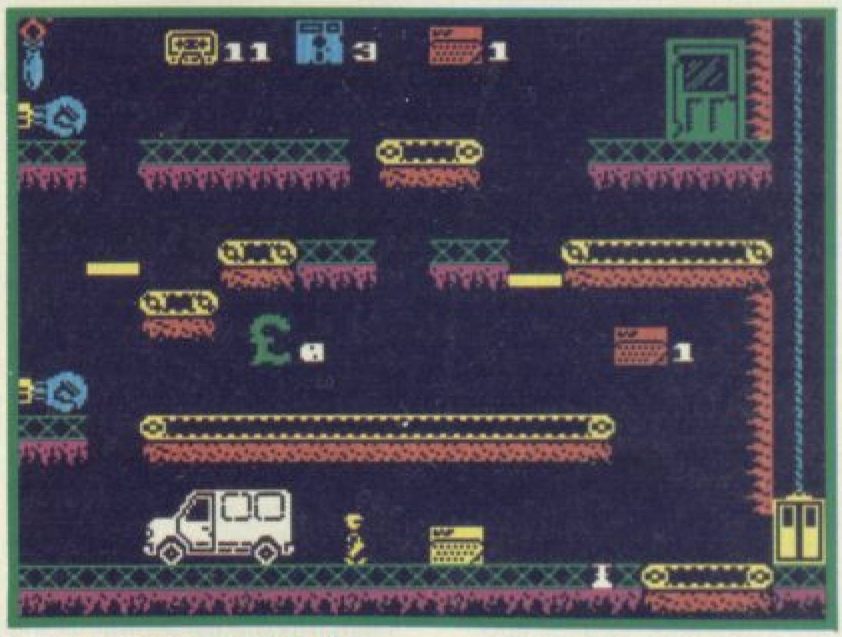
ARCADE REVIEW

WIBSTARS

Oh dearie me. Who let this one out? Someone somewhere, probably in the pub, decided that it would be funny to do a game which parodied the computer industry. Is it funny?

Well, do you think that calling the company **Wibstars** instead of Websters (a real company) is funny? I find it tedious.

When you try to base a game around a joke you have in the



pub the chances are it isn't going to hang together as a game. **Wibstars** is actually several games in one, another bad sign, the answer to not having one good idea is not to put together five bad ideas.

The object is to make computer products and then sell them at a profit. In practice this means playing three or four games which have no special relevance to the game idea and in contrast bear quite a lot of relevance to other peoples ideas.

For example: In stage one you choose, with your allotted budget what goods you will sell – a combination of discs, tapes or Spectrums. They cost different prices and you decide which combination is best. How do you select them? Using an icon/fork-lift truck arrangment straight out of **Ghostbusters**, then you have a screen where you try to pick up goods in your lorry – this involves driving between different tubes down which products are falling and catching as many as possible.

Next up is a section right out of half a dozen recent road games where your lorry drives to the shops, watch out for a car in front of you which drops junk, finally we get manic **Miner** meets everything else as your product has to ascend a series of ladders and platforms, via lifts and boxing gloves and make it to the shop. Your little man who can help the product on his way actually looks like Miner Willy.

The graphics are passable but, honestly, I can't believe A 'N' F is serious with this one. Avoid, utterly, completely, totally■

FACTS BOX

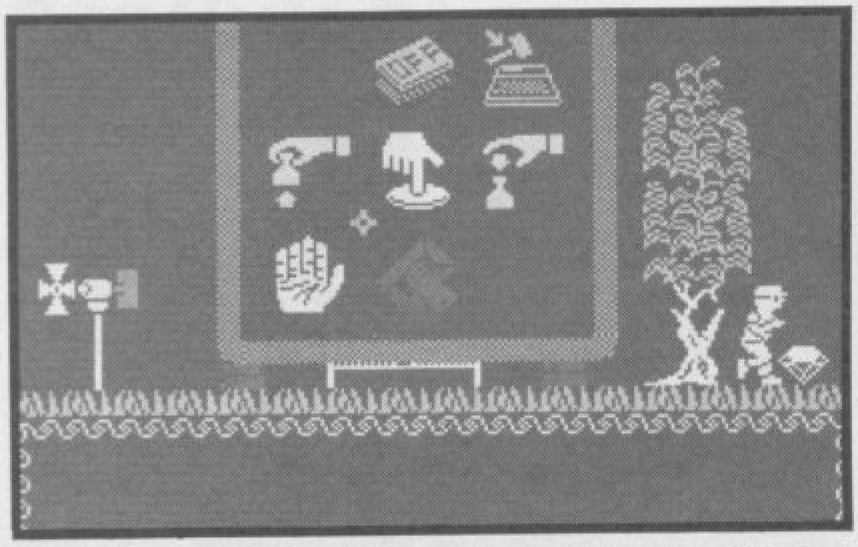
Horrible hodge podge of several budget games, based around a joke that was never funny. Don't even think about it

WIBSTARS
Label: A 'N' F
Author: in-house
Price: £8.95
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★☆☆☆☆





MEGABUCKS

Megabucks places you, as heir to your uncle's fortune, outside a huge mansion which is full of security systems and all sorts of advanced traps. Your mission is to find a way into the mansion and get hold of a hidden item which will entitle you to the cash that he left behind.

Sounds familiar? What we have here is yet another attempt at the arcade-adventure theme twiddled and tweaked to incorporate lots of menus and large-ish graphics.

Into the heady excitement of the game then, and we find ourselves standing on the first of an endless array of composite landscapes with an occasional object lying on the floor, just daring you to attempt to pick it up – thus loosing yourself in a maze of black boxes offering many object-manipulative options.

Everything is icon-controlled (hence all the boxes etc) and therefore you will have to get pretty darned efficient at selecting those icons in order to get anywhere before the time limit runs out or something else happens to end your game. You walk left and right in an extraordinarily predicatable manner picking up objects, fighting your way through black boxes and suchlike.

Most of the locations are rooms in the mansion and are generally interesting to look at – being quite detailed and colourful. The objects are pretty hard to miss, and are – to be fair – quite well drawn. By using the wretched menu system it is impossible to examine the objects and discover their use.

The Gem is a particularly good thing to get hold of, allowing you to fly around and thus reach locations previously hidden.

Well, there's not a great deal more to say about **Megabucks**. It's sort of OK, but is so flabbergastingly unoriginal that it's budget price is just about all it has in its favour■

FACTS BOX

Dreary, old-hat nonsense pretending to be a bargain purchase. Don't be taken in – it's flabbergastingly unoriginal!

MEGABUCKS
Label: Firebird Silver Range
Author: Ivan Horn
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★★☆☆☆

FALCON PATROL II

The problem is **Falcon Patrol II** – the Spectrum conversion of that old Virgin C64 hit – now from Bug-Byte – requires a good deal of imagination on the players' part if it is to offer any entertainment at all.

It pretends to be about defending your own territory from an onslaught of un-named-but-you-can-bet-they're-not-part-of-the-Free-West helicopters but the standard of programming is barely better than a type-in-yourself magazine listing.

Anyway, it's side-to-side scrolling with lots of killing and crummy graphics. It's all single character UDGs and attribute problems. At the start of the game, you are depicted on a small take-off pad amidst general scenes of destruction etc. Once your armaments are replenished and fuel tanks filled, it's off into the wide-blue yonder. As you fly around , enemy planes attack you.

The controls are not particularly responsive, and you have to continually battle to keep the plane off the ground.

Yes, I'm quite prepared to believe that this is all supremely accurate simulated gravity, but it's a terrific pain in the butt. Slow response and useless graphics are topped off by the horrific sound.

It's destined to be played for half-an-hour and put in a drawer for all eternity■

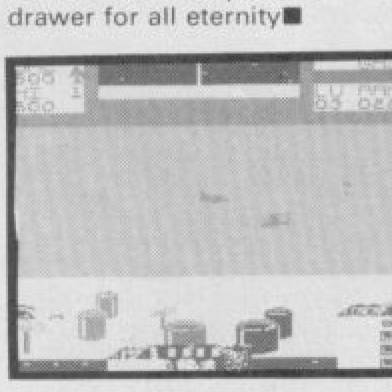
FACTS BOX

Bad sound, bad graphics and bad gameplay. Destined to be budget from birth. It's in no way redeemed by being cheap

FALCON PATROL II
Label: Bug Byte
Author: Steve Lee
Price: £2.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: various

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★☆☆☆☆



BMX SI

Pedal power is all you've got to beat the burms, bumps and ramps of Code Master's **BMX Simulator** –a budget game that recently reached the top of the Commodore top ten chart.

If you're not into the jargon of this biking cult the BMX is a racing machine with light-weigh frames, thick rubber wheels and powerful suspension.

Each course looks like a bomb shelter, scattered bits of old tyre, ramps, large or deep puddles and – on the most complex courses – arrows raked into the dirt which point directions. Hills around the course slow speeding bikes down and allow riders to change direction quickly.

At the start of each race you can alter the number of course tracks you go around and the number of players. It's a true two-player game – so you and a friend can whizz around the course simultaneously – but you can't change the control configuration.

The bikes glide off the ramps



FACTS BOX

Brilliant conversion of a C64 hit. Bikers' paradise with smooth slippery action. A genuine simulation

BMX SIMULATOR
Label: Code Masters
Author: Richard Darling
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

NUCLE

Amazing how last year's state of the art is this year's budget offering. A year or so back **Nuclear Countdown** would have been a Classic. This year it's a grade A top quality budget title. That's an advance I guess.

Visually **Nuclear Countdown** reminds me of a cross between **Gyroscope** and **Highway Encounter,** there are the 3D grids, holes and sliding platforms that remind me of the former. The funny little pyramids, barrels and other objects are inspired by the latter.

The game is played on a time limit. Your robot droid (yes another one of those) has to find its way through a maze of 25 rooms seeking out unstable cells and neutralising them (curiously this is achieved by blowing the thing up).

Inevitably there are the usual bumper assortment of robot droids lurking around each screen in the game. These scuttle about and should you bump into them – Zing! – back you go to the first screen again. This can get very frustrating. The grid-like rooms are not easy to negotiate either. Some sections forcibly slide you in one direction or another, whichever its the wrong way,

IMULATOR

and each accelerates just as long as you hold down the *Fire* buttons. Left and right on the joysticks turn the bikes anti-clockwise and clockwise. The best course of action is to stay on the narrow but less straight path.

When you're a beginner avoid the hills. They'll slow you up and cause the bike to wobble off in all sorts of directions. Equally, avoid the tyres in the centre of most courses. They'll send your biker flying in the air.

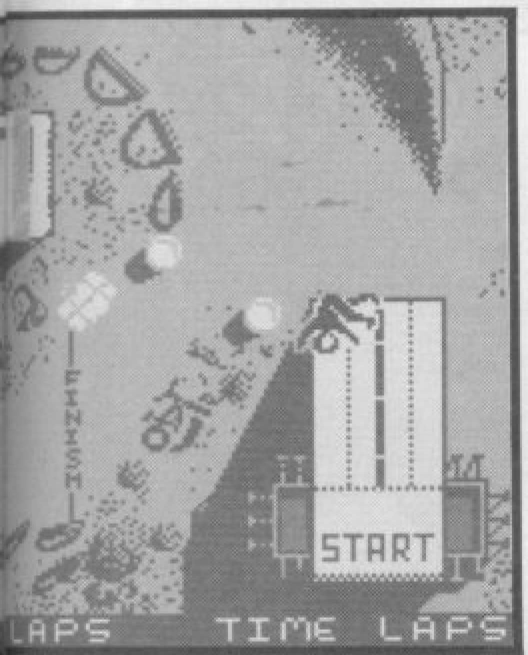
Anything goes as far as you and your opponent are concerned – after all, this is a simulation. You can force your friend's bike into trouble or knock him off with your front or back wheels – more likely you'll be the one that comes unstuck.

Talking of front and back wheels, you can't tell which is which. When you're starting off after a crash the bike is likely to be facing in the wrong direction. If you accelerate you'll crash again. So, make sure you turn 360 degrees before making a move.

The winner of each course is first past the post (surprise). You can, however, clock up a time even if you lose, as long as you pass the finishing line within the qualifying limit.

In the tradition of all the great simulators **BMX** allows you to learn by your mistakes. There's an action replay available if you came within a wheel's breadth of winning. It's in real time but you can slow the action down by pressing 'S'.

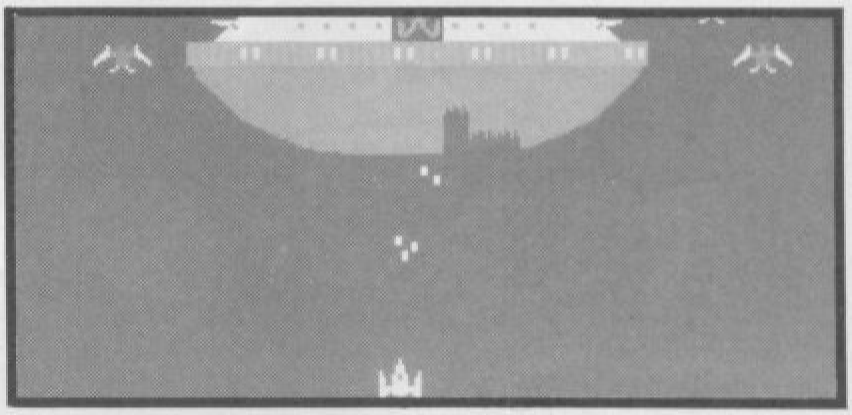
Richard Darling has done it again. This simulator is a full priced game in budget clothing and a classy conversion of the Commodore original■



BUDGET £1·99 £2·99 REVIEW

Pheenix is a very old game indeed. It became moderately popular during the post-**Galaxian** swirly-twirly shoot-out "boom". The concept of these games is to wipe out the alien horde before they do allkindzabadstuff to the Earth.

PHEENIX



In fact, **Pheenix** was just a form of **Space-Invaders** although the little blighters refused to stand in easy-to-kill lines. They zoomed around a bit and disguised themselves as large blue birds.

Indeed, there is a large blue bird on the cover artwork. Unfortunately it is very poorly drawn and gives the casual on looker little if any idea what on earth the game is about. *(Why do software companies use the name of a well known game – presumably for easy identification and thus increased sales – and then use a largely confusing piece of artwork? Discuss)*

Anyway, that's all by the by. Now, were we living in a romantic world, this is the point where I'd be able to say "But despite my initial feelings about the game, it's really great!" Unfortunately we don't, I can't and it's not.

Moving left and right and firing and using your shield (sometimes) may have been satisfactory a few years ago but it no longer holds the slightest interest. The gameplay is predictable, the graphics are uninspiring and the whole thing is very disappointing indeed.

And hold on to your horses all you "Ah yes, but it's a conversion of the arcade game and therefore the graphics remain faithful" crowd. It won't wash!

Pheenix is a load of hogwash. If – he says, nervously avoiding an entirely damning review – you really want a version of this tired old fogey, it may be worth a look■

FACTS BOX

Bah! Re-hashed hokum in a none-too-pretty wrapper. Avoid unless you want to be the only owner of this version

PHEENIX
Label: Alternative Software
Author: Martin Ward
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Jim Douglas

★★☆☆☆

AR COUNTDOWN

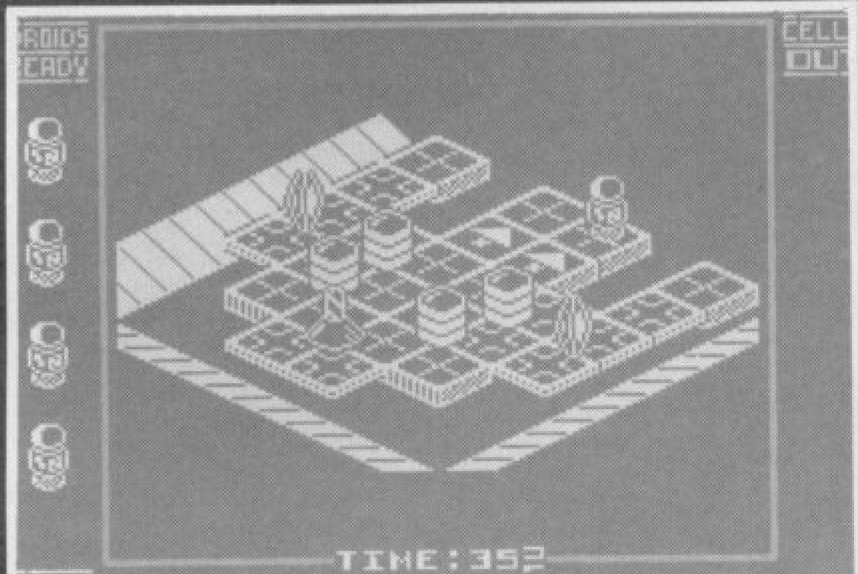
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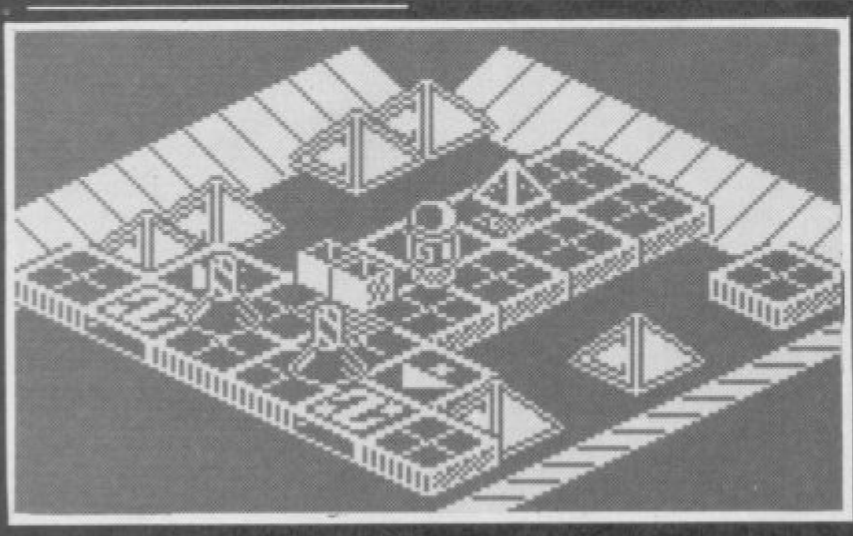
3D Arcade Game, that mixes Gyroscope with Highway Encounter to good effect. A first division budget title.

NUCLEAR COUNTDOWN
Label: Atlantis
Author: Adrian Longland
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joysticks: various

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★★☆





you can be sure of that.

Some squares drain energy shields (which defend you from at least some of the droid onslaught) others restore it. Some objects can be moved around, though I haven't found much reason to do so yet. Your continuing problem is to get to an energy restoring area before your shield energy drains completely.

It isn't terrifically original, and 25 rooms is not that awesome, but its very slickly programmed and well worth investigating. As I said, a year ago it would have been £9.95■

THE GROWING PAINS OF ADRIAN MOLE

ADVENTURE REVIEW

1987

Week 9. 54–311

February

Monday 23

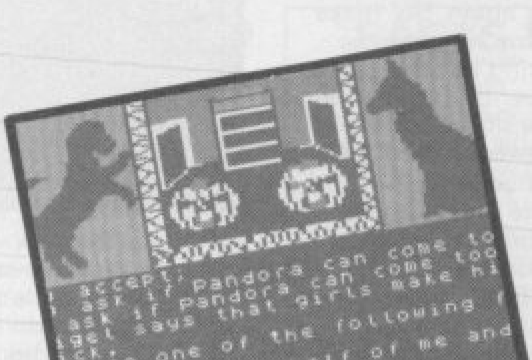
9.35: Two packages come into the SU office The editor gives me one of them. "Review this," he says editorially. The package is **The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole.** I try to look enthusiastic as an authentic jack-of-all trades journalist should, secretly I am depressed.

9.36: Barry Kent get the other package it is **Screaming Diz-busters Attack.** It looks dead good. I look at **Adrian Mole.** It is an adventure, I feel just like I did when I got socks for Christmas instead of a Sony walkman.

9.55: I have loaded the game. My eyes have gone funny from trying to read the text on our crummy television. I have also forgotten to stop the tape where it said.

9.57: I have read the first bit, it is just like the book, I have a feeling of what I now know to be Deja-Vu. I am impressed by the authentic accuracy of the game and yet miffed that I know many of the jokes already. I note that I am learning to be critically balanced already.

10.02: Barry Kent has scored ten million on **Screming Diz-busters,** for relaxation he comes to look at **Adrian Mole.** "Even considering the Spectrum's attribute problems those pictures at the top of the screen are useless," he says. Although he is a barbarian I



reluctantly agree with him. His neanderthal brain is sometimes oddly perceptive.

10.03: I play the game some more, I never have to do more than choose one out of three options or tell the computer to show me some more text. I feel that although my rating is now 'middling schoolboy' I deserve little credit and worry that Pandora will be more impressed by Barry Kent's 13,000057 on **Screaming Diz-busters** than my pathetic 46% on **Adrian Mole.**

10.10: I am beginning to think there is almost no connection between what choice you make in the game and what score you get. This is a crucial investigative point and shows my growing maturity as a journalist. Pandora will surely be impressed.

10.12: It only takes about five minutes to work through each section of the game, then you have to keep loading up new segments. So far I have forgotten to stop the tape three times. Barry Kent has been through all the screens of **Screaming Diz-busters** twelve times and now has a score of twelve because of a bug in the program.

10.15: I have laughed or inwardly smirked whilst playing **The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole** 15½ times (a good journalist must base his writings on hard facts according to the Editor so I kept a record). This is more than I laughed at **Mugsy** but less than I laughed at **World Cup Carnival.** I feel the phrase 'marginally humourous' hits the right note.

10.20: Although the temptation to write a damning indictment of the game which leaves the page smouldering in an authentic Bernard Levin manner is strong I feel one must be balanced. I must bear in mind that the program might be suitable for younger children who don't want more than three options at a time. Barry Kent says that even young children are better at computer games than me. I ignore him.

10.25: Enough is enough. I have broken the rewind on the tape machine and played through all the game once. I must now commit type to paper but Barry Kent has taken the mains lead■

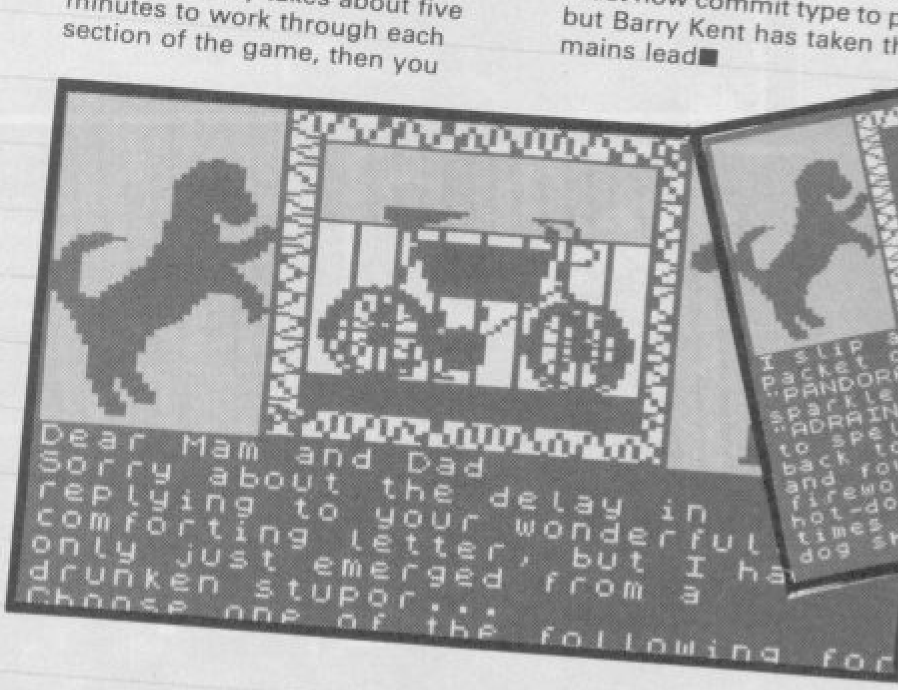
FACTS BOX

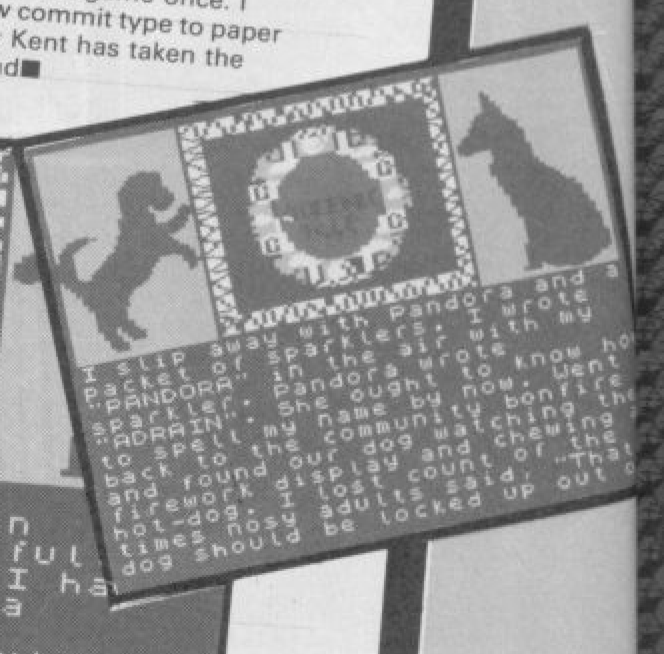
Marginally humourous second game based on the Adrian Mole books. It lacks much sense of involvement

THE GROWING PAINS OF ADRIAN MOLE
Label: Virgin Games
Author: Level 9
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Graham Taylor

★★★☆☆







ATARI·ST £14·95
AMSTRAD £8·95
COMMODORE £8·95
SPECTRUM £7·95
TAITO COIN-OP
TAITO COIN-OP
ARKANOID
Licensed from © Taito Corp. 1986.
Programmed for Amstrad, Spectrum, Commodore, Atari by Imagine Software
GOLDEN COIN-OP Hot Shot
Imagine
...the name of the game
Imagine Software (1984) Limited
6 Central Street • Manchester M2 5NS
Tel: 061 834 3939 • Telex: 669977
Screen shots taken from Arcade version.

Playing 'em wargames!

Wargames. What are they good for? Quite a lot actually if you're looking for something a bit more taxing than a kicky-platform effort (And wot's wrong with them, then?). Anyhow, Gary Rook finds out what all the fuss is about

Wargaming isn't just confined to micros.

For a start, wargames have just been used for training purposes by various European armies – notably the Prussians – for some hundreds of years.

Wargaming as entertainment dates to the beginning of this century. One of its first fans was H G Wells, better known for his SF novels like *War of the Worlds.* He played his warga ıes in his garden, with lead soldiers and matchstick-firing toy cannon.

Things stayed pretty much at that level for about fifty years, although various attempts to introduce more realistic ways of assessing casualties were made from time to time.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a steady supply of models which could be used for table-top games led to a rapid growth in the hobby's popularity. Instead of purely imaginary battles, fought with real missiles, serious attempts to recreate the great battles of the past became all the rage. Dice were introduced to handle combat – the actual probability of, say, a cannon hitting its target at various ranges would be worked out. Once a hit was scored, the dice would also be used to calculate how much damage was caused. But historical accuracy was all important, so every possible variable would be factored into the sums – morale, ammunition, training, visibility, the weather, how good a unit's officers were and so on.

Clubs and organisations were formed, many of which published their own sets of rules. Scientific development helped, too – plastic figures and kits soon appeared. Not only were they cheaper, but they were far lighter as well. With lead figures all to often tables and shelves collapsed under the sheer weight of metal involved!

Meanwhile, in America the first proper board war-games were produced. Instead of a table top, battles were fought on paper maps, marked out with squares – the now familiar hexagon grids only came later. Die-cut cardboard counters replaced legions of lead or plastic figures and the rules were often very complex indeed. Usually, each board game concentrated on a particular battle or campaign, although in the late 1970s monster games with maps covering room-sized spaces and thousands of counters were produced by various companies.

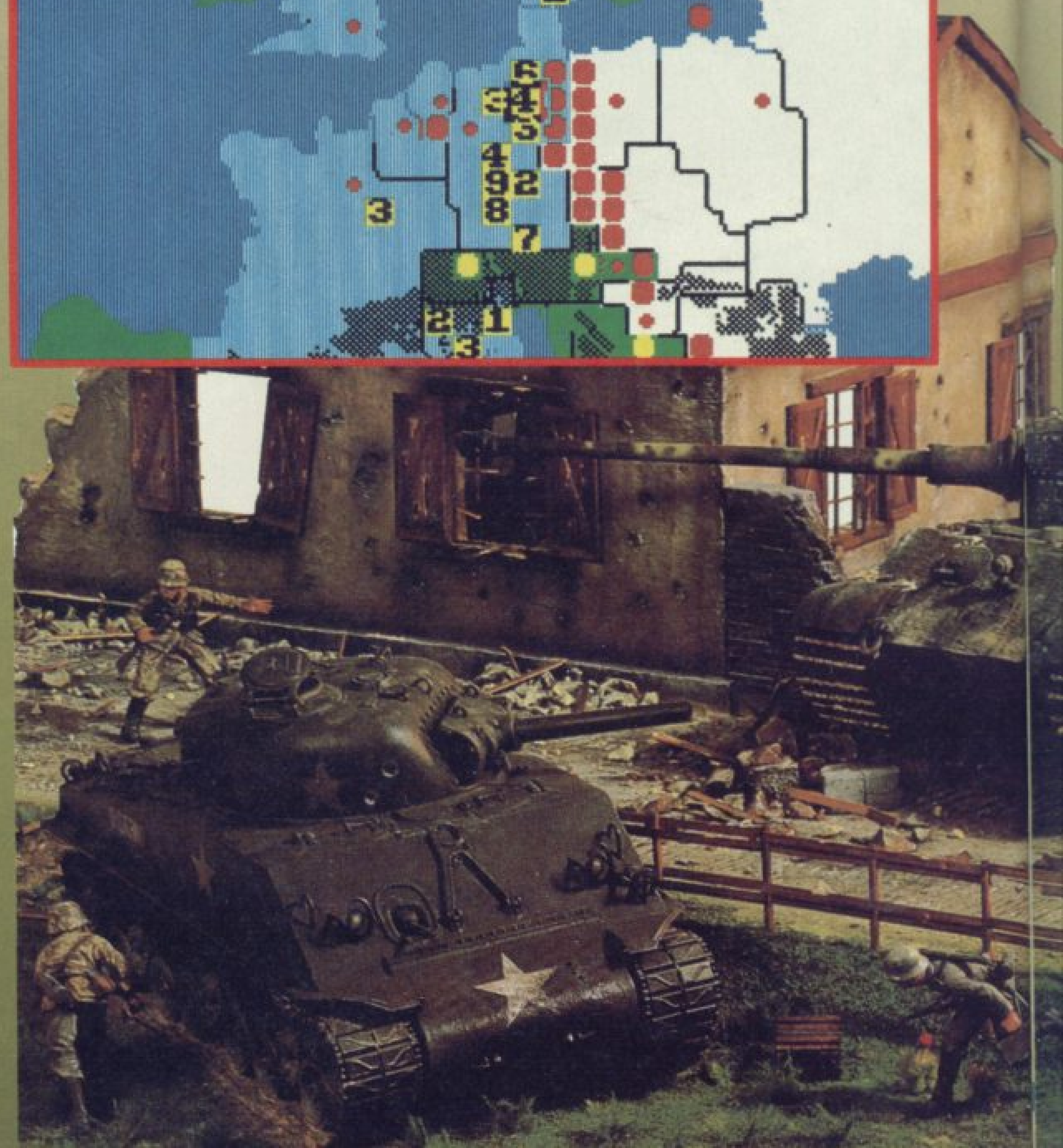
Combat, though, was in the main more simplistic on the board than in table top games. Board games were not usually concerned with individual soldiers but with regiments, divisions, corps or whole armies.

Then came Role Playing Games. Invented in the mid 1970s by a group of guys in Wisconsin the idea was instead of playing a general commanding an army, each player is an individual. The objective of a role playing game (RGP) is not to achieve set victory conditions as in other forms of wargaming, but to create a realistic character, complete with motivations, family background, education and career history.

The first – and still the most famous – role playing game is *Dungeons & Dragons,* which was amazingly successful. In it, participants played inhabitants of a quasi-medieval world where magic really worked. Drawing heavily on fantasy writing – in particular, the sub-genre known as swords and sorcery – *Dungeons & Dragons* started a multi-million dollar industry. There are now hundreds of RPGs covering heroic fantasy, science fiction, modern warfare and horror fantasy.

Role playing games were so successful for a number of reasons. Firstly, large numbers of people can take part at the same time (typically half a dozen). Secondly, within a loose rules framework, the players are encouraged to use their







▲ Serious fantasy with a medieval twist

imaginations and act out their fantasies (within limits, of course!).

Thirdly, there is no need for large armies of lead or plastic figures – in fact, RPGs can be played with just paper and pencil.

Computer wargames were originally restricted to simulations run for the military – real wargames, in fact. The advent of home computers, however, soon opened up a whole new area of the wargames hobby. Potentially, wargames programs on micros offer the solutions to most of the problems which the hobby has faced in the past. The computer can be the perfect opponent: it can't see what you're doing, it won't cheat, it won't get bored or have a tantrum, it has perfect recall of the rules, it's ready to play at all hours of the day and night, and it doesn't mind losing.

Home computers, coupling an enormous graphics potential with the speed with which they can perform abstract calculations – very necessary in most wargames – must have seemed like the answer to the wargamers' prayer.

Unfortunately, very few games designers have yet been able to translate tabletop or board games on to the small screen with any great success, although RPGs have proved far easier to adapt for computers.

What the next step in the development of wargaming is remains to be seen. But there have been various experiments in 'live' role playing. One example involves adventures in a real castle, with players dressed in fake armour. Another pits teams of people armed with paint guns against each other.

The ultimate so far is the laser combat arena. The game takes place in an enclosed area about the size of a couple of tennis courts. Players are



armed with guns which fire pulses of light. These register when they hit the special tunics everybody taking part has to wear, and a master computer keeps the score. The computer can also alter the playing area by moving scenery around or generating smoke to reduce visibility. An American idea, but supposedly coming to the UK soon – an arena was planned for Great Yarmouth.

With increased computer power, why not 'live' wargaming using low power laser weapons and advanced holograms? The idea may seem far fetched at the moment, but we'll probably see the reality sooner than we think.

And then move over Sylvester Stallone – anybody could be Rambo. And don't worry about the blood – it'll all come out in the wash. . .■

Computer wargames

There are a fair number of computer wargames on the market at the moment.

Most of them are written by people who have played board wargames, though, and it tends to show. They are still bogged down by the restrictions of the board wargames form, even though they're not board wargames.

One particular gripe I have is that too many computer wargames are written for two players, which at best is a waste of precious memory space. Unless you can link up two micros back to back, so each player has his or her own keyboard and screen, you have to share one computer. What fun is there in a game where you have to turn your back for half an hour while your opponent moves? Some games don't even have one-player options which is downright crazy.

The whole point of computer wargames is that the computer is the opponent.

There are some very good computer wargames available though. *Desert Rats* and *Arnhem* from CCS, *Legions of Death* and *Johnny Reb II* from Argus, *Samurai* from CRL and *Their Finest Hour* from Century Communications are all great.

The best wargames programmers, though, are American, and not many of their products have yet been converted for the Spectrum. US Gold, though, is supposed to be converting some titles from the top US Strategic Simulations Inc.

Some companies have written what are effectively role playing games, only on computers. The players create characters, form parties and adventure in much the same way as with an ordinary RPG.

There are also various programs around which are supposed to help with the book-keeping in role playing games. Few of these have been licenced, so they can't use the names of the games they have been written for, but you can get programs to help you create characters, for example. A couple of companies have produced hybrids of traditional board and computer games – you get a board and counters, but the rules are in a computer program, which also plays the opponent. You type in where your forces are moving to, and the computer works out its own responses. One such game is called *ATRAM*, a simulation of air combat.

There is much greater scope, however, for computer wargames, and indeed for the use of computers in wargames generally. At any wargames convention, there will be some gamers who will be using home micros to run their games.

Wargames programs are getting more and more sophisticated and Computers are ideal for the realistic simulation of what happens on the battlefield – once someone can write the right programs, that is■





▲ Battle of Britain from PSS

◀ WWII diorama

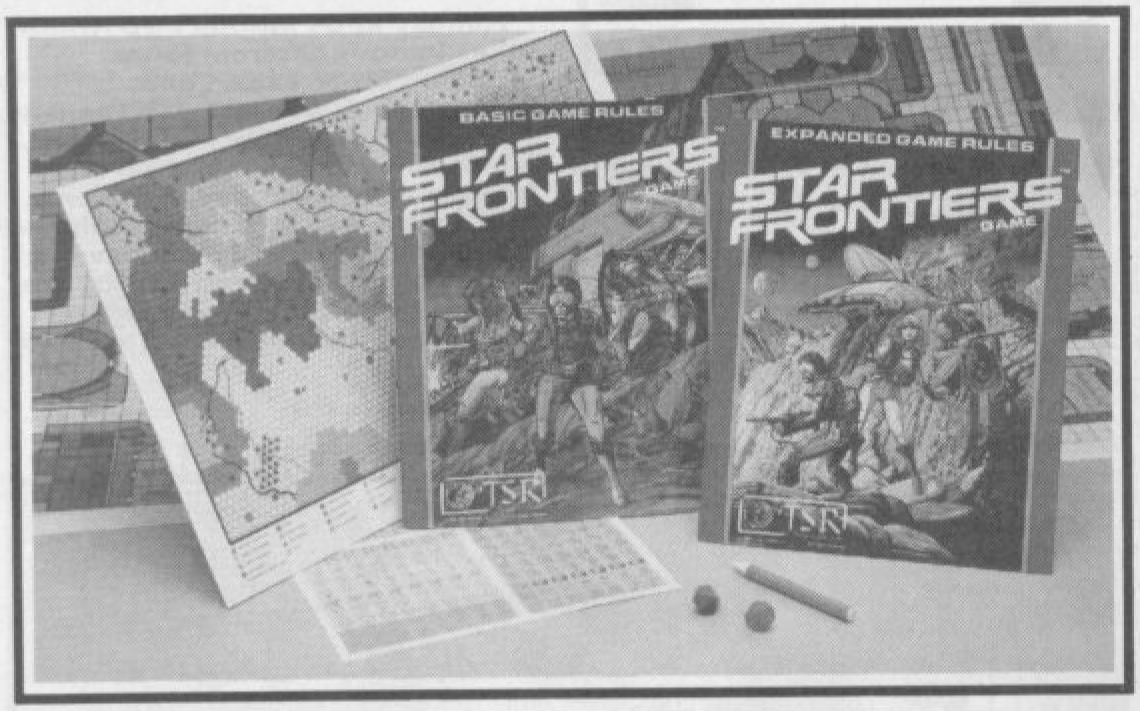
Tabletop wargaming

Table top wargaming is no longer as popular as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, but it still commands a considerable following.

Tabletop games are divided into types historically, with each period separated by some major development in the science of warfare.

● So the ancient period runs from the beginning of recorded history – around 4,000BC – until the use of gunpowder becomes widespread

▶79



77

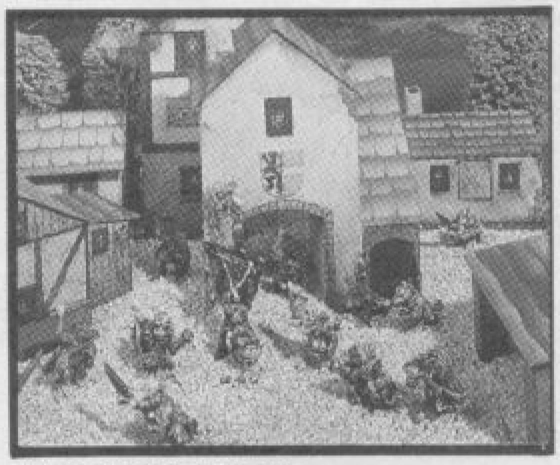
and signals the start of the middle ages (around 1200AD).

- The middle ages are followed by the renaissance, dominated by the development of the idea of the nation state and the national army, and, in the mid 17th century, by the tactical innovations of the Swedish soldier king Gustavus Adolphus.
- From the wargamers' point of view, little of real importance happens from then until the French Revolution leads to the Napoleaonic wars. The difference between Napoleonic warfare and the eras that preceded it are again tactical rather than technological.
- Another gap with little of interest to most gamers is followed by the American Civil war period (the Crimea seems to appeal to very few). Here is it the technology that changes. while the weapons and tactics used were mostly identical to those used at Waterloo 50 years before, there were added factors – railways, telegraphic communications, steam powered boats and ironclad battleships – plus, towards the end of the war, the machine gun.
- It's the machine gun that makes the Great War – the First World War – of little interest to gamers: things are too bogged down. The hobby really pick up, though, in the late 1930s and goes into over-drive for the Second World War, which fascinates many table-top gamers mainly because of the accelerated pace of both technological and tactical developments.

Apart from the above, there are also gamers who concentrate on



▲*D&D* with medieval overtones



▲More orcs on the table top

fantasy tabletop gaming, or on future events – the Third World War, or SF games. Then there are those who like to concentrate on the less crowded areas of history – there are plenty of these: colonial wars in Africa, perhaps; or the American War of Independence; or the Seven Years War, the Six weeks War or the Six Day War. All have their supporters. There are also naval gamers, who will usually concentrate on a period in the same way as others, but will be specialists in seaborne warfare. Then there are those who prefer combat in the air.

If you're interested in the idea of tabletop gaming, then the best idea is to find someone who already plays. This way, you can get a feel for it without committing too much in the way of time or effort. Many schools and colleges have wargames clubs or there are clubs in various parts of the country. There are also conventions held all over the place, usually organised by local clubs. Also there are two magazines which carry information about clubs and events – *Military Modelling* and *Miniature Wargames*■

Board wargaming

Board games take up far less space than armies of figures, and in many ways are far more flexible. A stiff paper or card backed map takes the place of the tabletop, and counters replace the figures. Most boardgamers, though, have more than one game – usually a dozen and sometimes more!

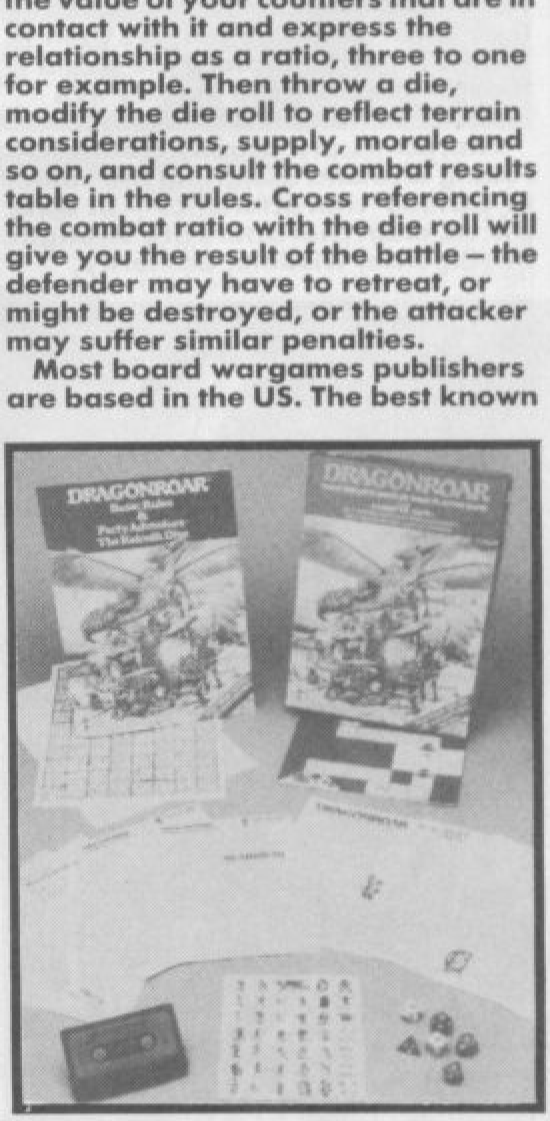
As with tabletop gaming, boardgames are broken down by historical period – but people don't tend to specialise as much as with figure gaming. Once you've built up, say, a French Napoleonic army in lead or plastic, you're really restricted to that one period and, more often than not, to being Napoleon. However great a general he was, there is a limit to the number of times you can stick one hand inside your vest and mutter 'not tonight Josephine.'

With boardgames, there is no such restriction: you can have games from as many different periods as you like, and since people tend to get less attached to bits of cardboard, there are fewer arguments about whose turn it is to be Wellington, or Lee, or Caesar, or Wolfe. . .

In most games, a hexagonal grid is overlaid on the map. This is used to regulate movement and combat. Each hexagon – hex, they're usually called – will contain map symbols indicating what type of terrain is in that area. Unit counters – the cardboard squares with the pretty colours on – will have a movement value printed on them. Usually, that indicates the number of clear terrain hexes they can move through in one turn: woods would cost more movement points, as would swamps, hills or mountains. The exact values vary from game to game. Usually, once one player has moved all his/her units, the other player moves.

The unit counters will also have combat values marked on them. To attack an enemey counter (in most games, at least) you would add up the value of your counters that are in contact with it and express the relationship as a ratio, three to one for example. Then throw a die, modify the die roll to reflect terrain considerations, supply, morale and so on, and consult the combat results table in the rules. Cross referencing the combat ratio with the die roll will give you the result of the battle – the defender may have to retreat, or might be destroyed, or the attacker may suffer similar penalties.

Most board wargames publishers are based in the US. The best known



▲Typical role-playing board game gear

80

◀ 79

publishers are probably the Avalon Hill Games Company and Strategic Publications Inc (SPI for short), now owned by TSR, the company which published the first role-playing game, *Dungeons & Dragons.* Other companies include Victory Games, West End Games, World Wide Wargamers, Task Force Games and Metagaming.

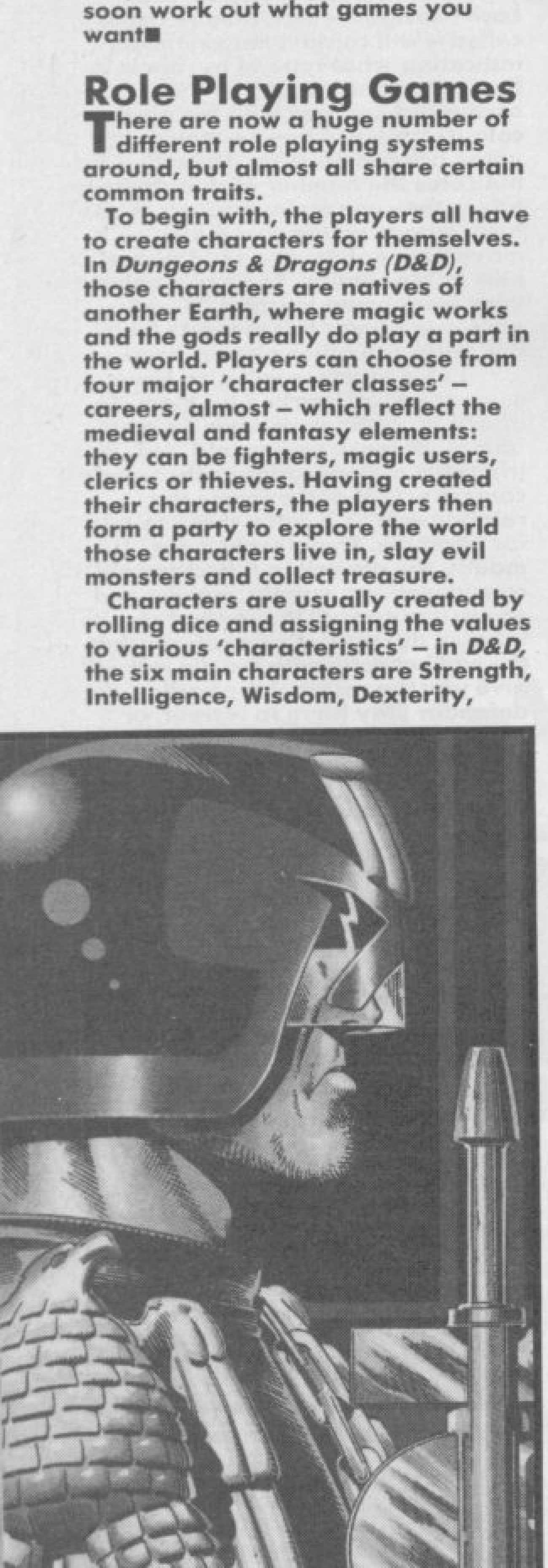
If you want to try board wargaming, the advice is much the same as with the tabletop variety. Many clubs which play tabletop games will also have members who play board games. Or go to one of the specialist games shops around the country – the largest chains are the Games Workshop shops and the Virgin Games Centres. At a high street store you can get advice from expert staff who should be able to help you choose a game that won't be too difficult, and that you'll find interesting. Once you've played a couple of different games, you'll soon work out what games you want■

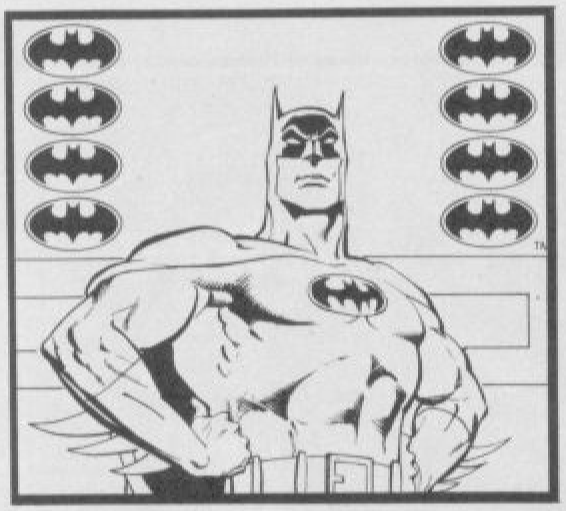
Role Playing Games

There are now a huge number of different role playing systems around, but almost all share certain common traits.

To begin with, the players all have to create characters for themselves. In *Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)*, those characters are natives of another Earth, where magic works and the gods really do play a part in the world. Players can choose from four major 'character classes' – careers, almost – which reflect the medieval and fantasy elements: they can be fighters, magic users, clerics or thieves. Having created their characters, the players then form a party to explore the world those characters live in, slay evil monsters and collect treasure.

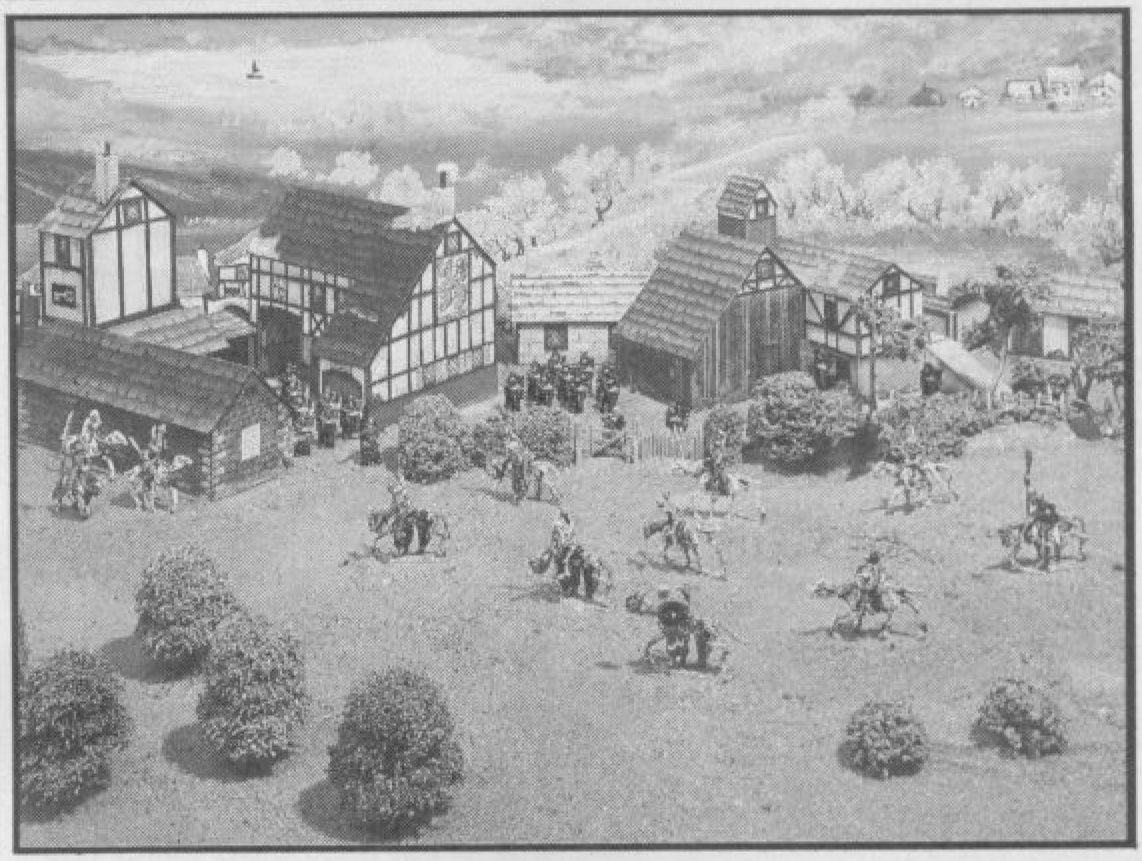
Characters are usually created by rolling dice and assigning the values to various 'characteristics' – in *D&D,* the six main characters are Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity,





◀Even Batman is an RPG

▼Fantasy table top scene



Constitution and Charisma. Strong characters will be fighters, bright ones magic users, wise once clerics and dextrous ones thieves. The other two values are used to show how healthy a character is, and how well liked he or she may be. Other details are usually up to the character to decide – race, sex, hair colour and so on. The world in an RPG is created and populated by a referee. This referee is known by different names according to what game is being played – in *D&D* it's Dungeon Master, in others it might be Games Master, Controller, Star Master or even Computer. The referee, using a sort of story outline which s/he has prepared in advance, will tell the characters what they see. The players then have to say what their characters are doing – very like in an adventure game, only the referee will have a far wider range of responses than any computer program would have.

Typically, the referee might say something like 'You see a 10 foot wide corridor leading away from you. To the North wall there is a door. . .' What the characters then do is up to the players who control them – remembering always that they should act 'in character'. So someone who is supposed to be stupid shouldn't rely on brains, and someone who is supposed to be brave shouldn't run away from a fight.

Fantasy RPGs include *D&D* (which takes various different forms including Basic, Expert and Advanced), *Runequest, The Fantasy Trip* and *Warhammer. Warhammer,* which developed out of a set of fantasy wargame rules, is the only major system to have been designed in this country. All of them have certain common characteristics, like the use of 'primitive' weapons, magic, and the existence of various non-human intelligent races.

Other popular systems include *Traveller* and *Space Opera* (Science Fiction), *Call of Cthulhu* (horror), *Bushido* (Ancient Japan with magic), *Aftermath, Gamma World* and *Twilight 2000* (post nuclear holocaust).

There are also a number of RPGs based on famous literary and film characters (they don't just licence computer games), including *Star Trek, Judge Dredd, Dr Who, Indiana Jones, Marvel Superheroes, Ghostbusters* and *James Bond.* No doubt we will soon see *Miami Vice* and *Equaliser* RPGs.

For advice on RPGs, you can go to the same places as for board wargames – or you can buy various magazines, including *White Dwarf* (the Games Workshop house magazine) or *The Dragon* (published by TSR). There are also conventions run up and down the country: the big event of the year is Games Day, held in London every autumn. There are also a number of Dragonmeets organised in London and other major cities. Both Games Day and Dragonmeet are run by Games Workshops. TSR (UK) also has its own convention, Games Fair, which happens in Reading around Eastertime every year, where the official UK Advanced Dungeons and Dragon Championships are held. But it's a ticket only affair, limited to around 400 people■

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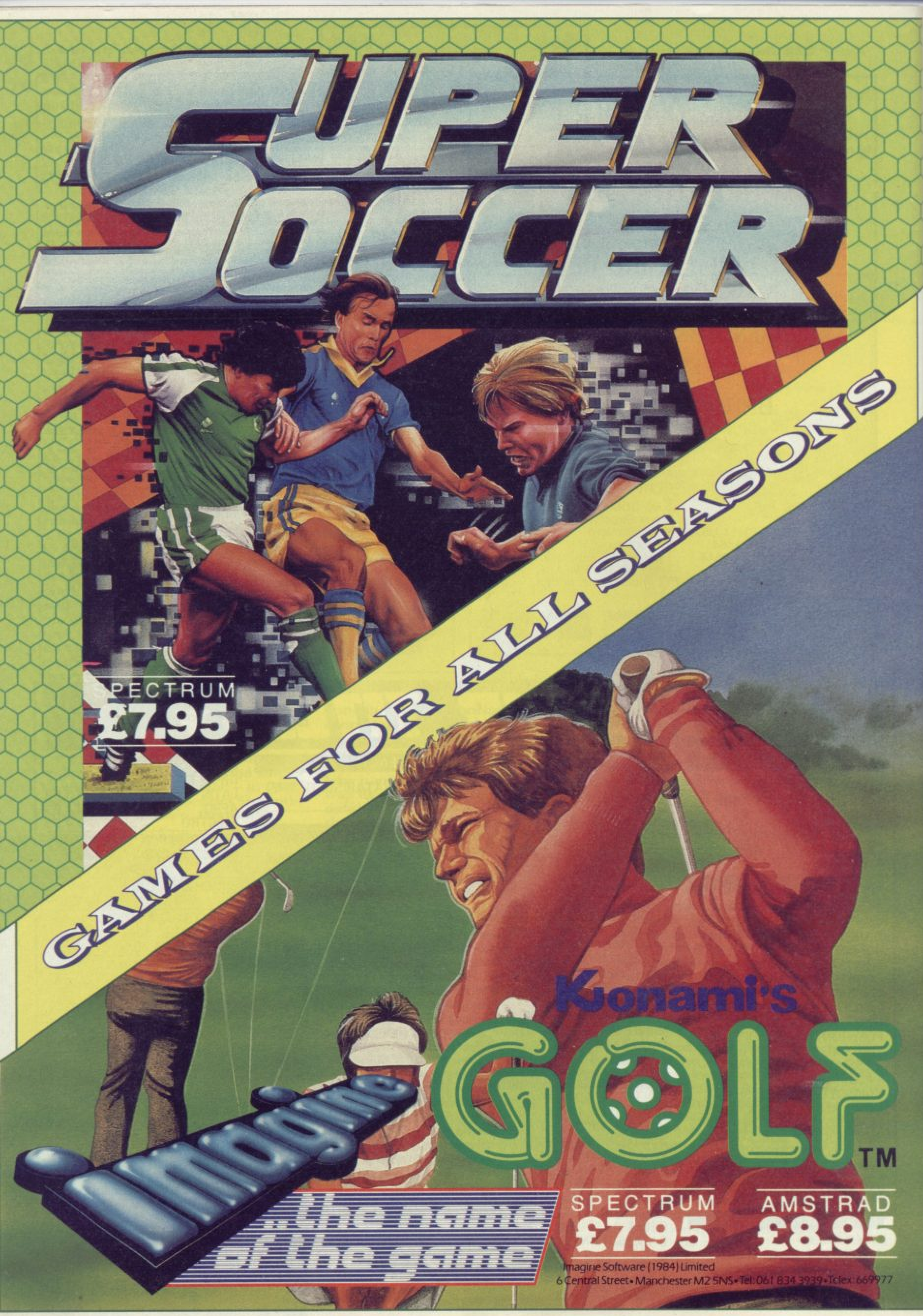
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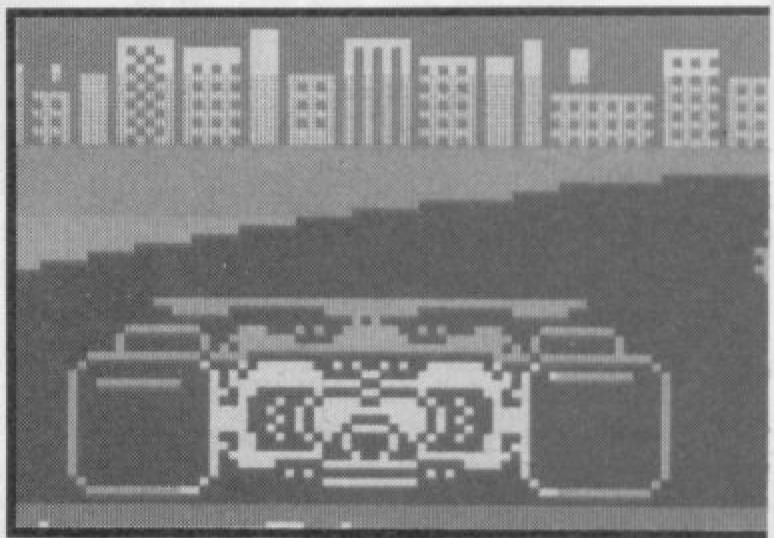
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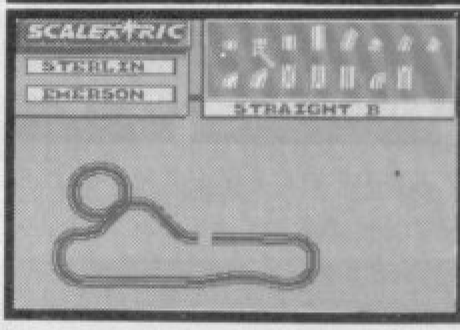


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NEEEOWWW

Zooooom! Virgin's conversion of Scalextric on the Spectrum may be pretty whizzy, but there is much to be said for the real thing. Ah, the smell of the over-heating engines, the warmth of those hand controllers and the crack of the plastic track as you kneel on the chicane attempting to fit the last curve into the layout. All this, could be yours in our simple to enter competition.





The Prizes:

★ The lucky first prize winner will receive a brand spanking new Scalextric set with all the stuff you could possibly want; cars, controllers and lots of track. He/she will also take away a copy of Virgin's flam-borilliant **Scalextric** on the Spectrum.

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Noughts and Crosses

by Mark Pickford

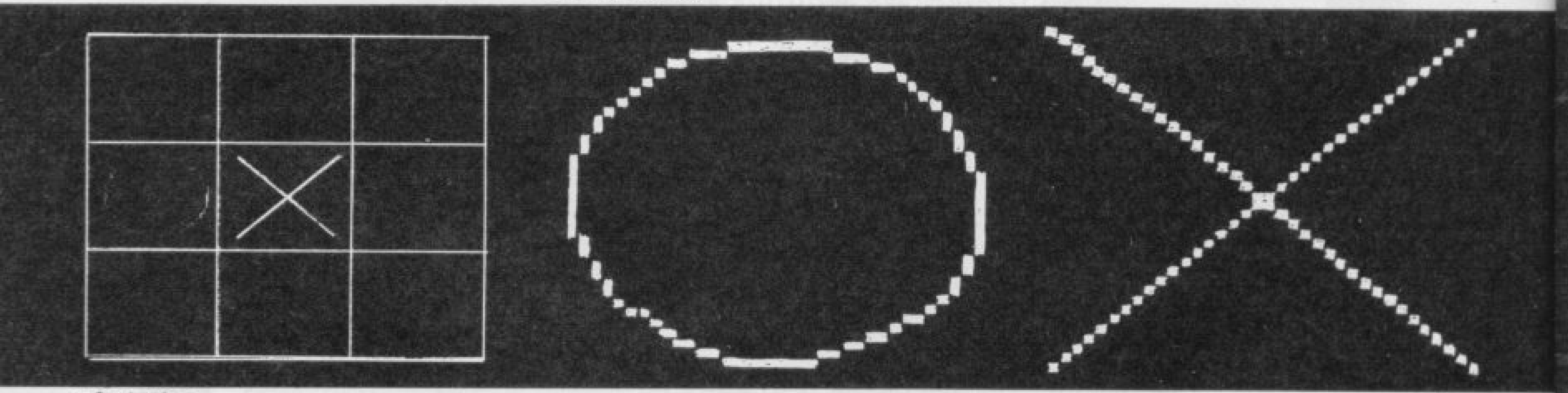
Noughts and crosses is an extremely simple example of basic artificial intelligence. Type it in and try to beat the computer at its own game. Full instructions are enclosed in the program

```
   2              REM *
           *
   3              REM * NOUGHTS A
ND CROSSES *
   4              REM * MARK PICK
FORD1986 *
   5              REM *
           *
   6              REM ***********
*************
  10 RANDOMIZE
  15 POKE 23609,35
  20 DIM B(3): DIM C(3)
  30 FOR F=1 TO 3: READ B(F): NE
XT F
  40 FOR F=1 TO 3: READ C(F): NE
XT F
  80 DATA 54,98,142
  90 DATA 35,77,122
  95 GO SUB 6000
  97 CLS
 100 GO SUB 8000: REM GRID
 990 DIM A(3,3): DIM L(8)
1000 INPUT "CO-ORDINATES";X,Y
1010 IF X<1 OR X>3 OR X<>INT (X)
 OR Y<1 OR Y>3 OR Y<>INT (Y) THE
N  PRINT AT 21,3;"OUT OF RANGE T
RY AGAIN": GO TO 1000
1015 IF A(X,Y)>0 THEN  PRINT AT
21,3;"POSITION FILLED": GO TO 10
00
1017 PRINT AT 21,3;"
                    "
1020 LET X$="X": LET SC=1
1030 IF X$="X" THEN  PLOT B(X),C
(Y): DRAW  INK 2;35,35: PLOT B(X
)+35,C(Y): DRAW  INK 2;-35,35: G
O TO 1040
1035 CIRCLE  INK 0;B(X)+17,C(Y)+
17,17
1040 LET A(X,Y)=SC
1050 LET L(X)=L(X)+SC
1060 LET L(Y+3)=L(Y+3)+SC
1070 IF X=Y THEN  LET L(7)=L(7)+
SC
1080 IF X+Y=4 THEN  LET L(8)=L(8
)+SC
1085 IF RND>.5 THEN  LET R1=8: L
ET R2=1: LET R3=-1: GO TO 1090
1086 LET R1=1: LET R2=8: LET R3=
1
1090 FOR Z=R1 TO R2 STEP R3
1100 IF SC=1 AND L(Z)=3 THEN  GO
 TO 9010
1101 IF SC=10 AND L(Z)=30 THEN
GO TO 5000
1110 NEXT Z
1115 IF SC=10 THEN  GO TO 1000
1120 REM COMPUTERS GO
1125 RESTORE 1137
1130 LET SC=10: LET X$="O"
1135 FOR W=1 TO 4
1136 READ Q
1137 DATA 20,2,10,1
1138 LET R=RND
1139 IF R>.5 THEN  LET R1=8: LET
 R2=1: LET R3=-1: GO TO 1143
1140 LET R1=1: LET R2=8: LET R3=
1
1143 FOR Z=R1 TO R2 STEP R3
1150 IF L(Z)=Q THEN  GO TO 1170
1160 NEXT Z
1161 NEXT W
1162 PRINT AT 19,1;"STALEMATE":
GO TO 9110
1170 IF Z>3 THEN  GO TO 1200
1180 IF RND>.5 THEN  FOR W=1 TO
3: GO TO 1190
1185 FOR w=3 TO 1 STEP -1
1190 IF A(Z,W)=0 THEN  LET X=Z:
LET Y=W: GO TO 1030
1195 NEXT W
1200 IF Z>6 THEN  GO TO 1240
1210 FOR W=1 TO 3
1220 IF A(W,Z-3)=0 THEN  LET X=W
: LET Y=Z-3: GO TO 1030
1230 NEXT W
1240 IF Z=8 THEN  GO TO 1280
1250 FOR W=1 TO 3
1260 IF A(W,W)=0 THEN  LET X=W:
LET Y=W: GO TO 1030
1270 NEXT W
1280 FOR W=1 TO 3
1285 IF A(W,4-W)=0 THEN  LET X=W
: LET Y=4-W: GO TO 1030
1290 NEXT W
4999 STOP
5000 REM COMP WIN
5010 PRINT AT 2,2;"HA HA THE COM
PUTER WON": GO TO 9110
6000 REM INSTRUCTIONS
6010 INK 1: PAPER 6: BORDER 6: C
LS : PRINT AT 2,2;"NOUGHTS AND C
ROSSES ";AT 3,2;"
                  ";AT 5,2;
MARK PICKFORD 1986"
6020 PRINT AT 7,2;"DO YOU REQUIR
E INSTRUCTIONS ";AT 8,2;"(Y OR N
)": PAUSE 0: IF INKEY$="N" OR IN
KEY$="n" THEN  RETURN
6030 PRINT AT 7,2;"


                          "
6040 PRINT AT 7,2;"THIS IS THE C
OMPUTER VERSION    OF NOUGHTS AN
D CROSSES.":
6050 PRINT AT 9,2;"YOU ARE CROSS
ES.";AT 10,2;"YOU HAVE TO GET A
LINE ";AT 12,4;"DIAGONALLY";AT 1
3,4;"HORIZONTALLY";AT 14,1;"OR V
ERTICALLY"
6060 PRINT AT 16,2;"THE FIRST PE
RSON(YOU  OR FRED)";AT 17,2;"TO
DO THIS WINS";AT 18,2;"P.S. FRED
 IS THE COMPUTER"
6070 PRINT AT 19,2;"YOU TYPE THE
 CO-ORDINATES OF";AT 20,2;"WHERE
 YOU WANT TO GO"
6080 PRINT AT 21,2;"PRESS ANY KE
Y TO START": PAUSE 0: RETURN
8000 REM GRID
8010 PLOT 50,30: DRAW 0,132: DRA
W 132,0: DRAW 0,-132: DRAW -132,
0
8015 BEEP .5,1
8020 DRAW 0,44: DRAW 132,0: DRAW
 0,44: DRAW -132,0:
8025 BEEP .5,3
8030 DRAW 0,44: DRAW 44,0: DRAW
0,-132
8035 BEEP .5,5
8040 DRAW 44,0: DRAW 0,132
8045 BEEP .5,6
8050 PRINT AT 20,8;"1";AT 20,14;
"2";AT 20,20;"3"
8060 PRINT AT 4,4;"3";AT 9,4;"2"
;AT 14,4;"1"
9000 RETURN
9010 FOR G=1 TO 2
9015 PAUSE 40
9020 BEEP .2,1: BEEP .2,3: BEEP
.2,5: BEEP .3,6: BEEP .3,1
9025 PAUSE 5
9030 BEEP .2,6: BEEP .2,5:: BEEP
 .2,6: BEEP .3,8: BEEP .4,3
9035 PAUSE 5
9040 BEEP .2,3: BEEP .2,5: BEEP
.2,6: BEEP .2,10
9050 BEEP .2,8: BEEP .2,8: BEEP
.2,6: BEEP .2,6: BEEP .2,5
9060 BEEP .2,3: BEEP .2,5:
9065 IF G=1 THEN  BEEP .2,1
9070 NEXT G
9080 BEEP .2,6
9090 CLS : PRINT AT          2,2;;
"
                  "
9100 PRINT AT 8,2; INK 2;




9110 PRINT AT 20,1;"DO YOU WANT
ANOTHER GO (Y OR N)": PAUSE 0: I
F INKEY$="Y" OR INKEY$="y" THEN
 RUN
9120 BEEP 1,1: LIST
```





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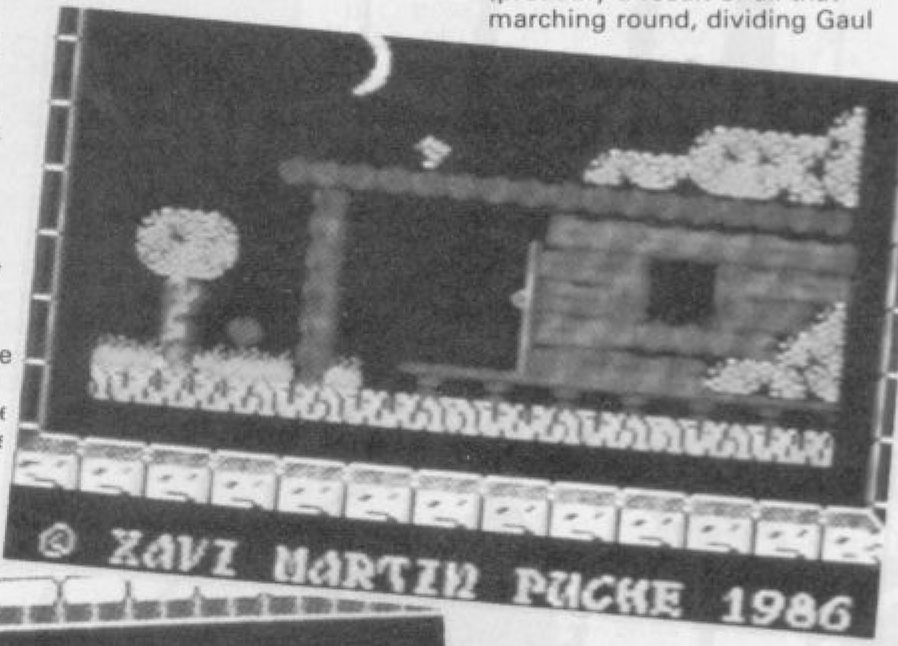
BUDGET £1·99 £2·99 **REVIEW**

ROCMAN

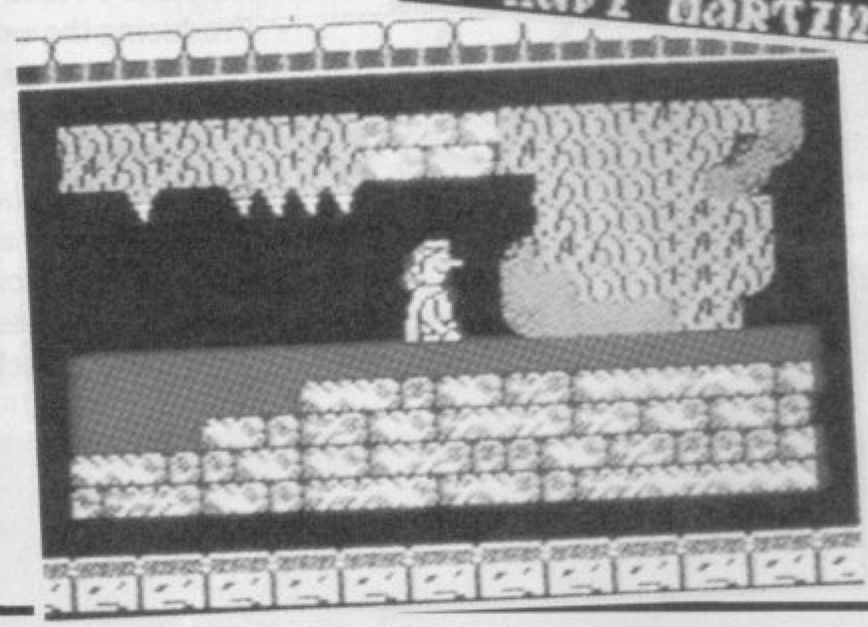
There are games with simple plots, games with indescribably complex plots, but with **Rocman** I'm afraid the plot will be mostly guesswork, because it arrived hot from Hispania, without even an inlay card. But Jim tells me it concerns a quest for a mislaid Grail!

The synthesised speech is an indication of the polish that's gone into **Rocman.** The idea of a Roman (though he may be from modern day Barcelona, on his way to a fancy dress ball, for all I know) who has to trudge around, picking up objects and avoiding gliding eyeballs in caves, isn't going to win too many awards for originality. But do a thing with enough style and you can still save the day.

The thought that has gone into the scrolling scenery has really paid off, as you set your Rocam roamin' through an exotic landscape. **Rocman** himself is a fair size figure, large enough to show off an enthusiastic grin. The only side effect of his size is that timing jump, to avoid the eyeball nasties, is tricky, and his pace is perhaps a trifle plodding.



(probably a result of all that marching round, dividing Gaul into three parts).



The game's construction is a little formulaeic, so that if you pick up an object, you won't have to walk far before you find a use for it! So, whenever you find a heart, which gives you a boost of extra strength, you can be sure that there's a sudden drop ahead to use it up.

But this is a budget game and there's enough in it to make it an amusing diversion, even if you can't help wishing that the programming and graphic skills could be used to a rather more original end, next time.

FACTS BOX

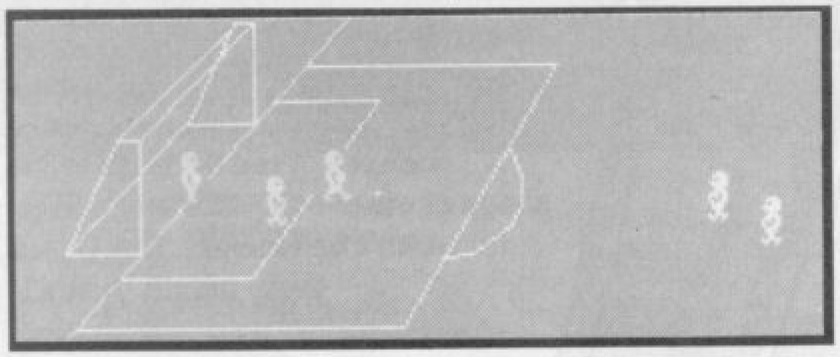
Great graphics and amusing effects redeem this from being just another arcade adventure

ROCMAN
Label: Budgie
Author: Xavi Martin Puche
Price: £2.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: cursor, Sinclair, Kempston

Reviewer: Jerry Muir

★★★☆☆

LEAGUE CHALLENGE



Atlantis' **League Challenge** is not quite **Football Manager** at not quite £2.

Four divisions with 16 teams in each, one cup competition and excrutiatingly slow results sequences and league table compilations are evidence of the low rent nature of this game.

The latest manager signing on at the job centre is Orient's Brian Docherty. I chose him for **League Challenge** and Big Bri – as the East London club's fans had dubbed their cigar-smoking, champagne drinking manager – left his club languishing in the bottom four of the third division. Having spent lavishly on players and despite pulling Orient out of the fourth division he put the club into the red.

Your managerial chores include, deciding on the team's training, buying and selling players, picking the team and cheering n' hollering: "Save it" or "Score! I paid £90,000 for you, Rush you dodo," as the computer plays out the brief highlights of your games.

Not too much to do and a season can really drag by, waiting for another game's results. The aim is to pack the team with skilful players and then whip them into shape by training and judicious resting, before matching defence, midfield and attack points against your rivals.

The computer weighs the odds heavily against you – even changing the rules(!) and some very bizarre tactics are needed to succeed.

FACTS BOX

There are better football manager games but it's probably tough to find one tougher. Only for the extremely patient

LEAGUE CHALLENGE
Label: Atlantis
Author: Nigel Edwards
Price: £1.99
Memory: 48K/128K
Joystick: none

Reviewer: Pratt

★★☆☆☆



HINTS AND TIPS

- Star players often go to pieces at the end of a season so sell them before game 15.
- For the same reason make your big signings early in a season.
- If you're going to get whopped anyway, rest all the tired looking players. I often played with seven or eight men and still only lost by the odd goal

"What about your allegation of cheating Brian?"

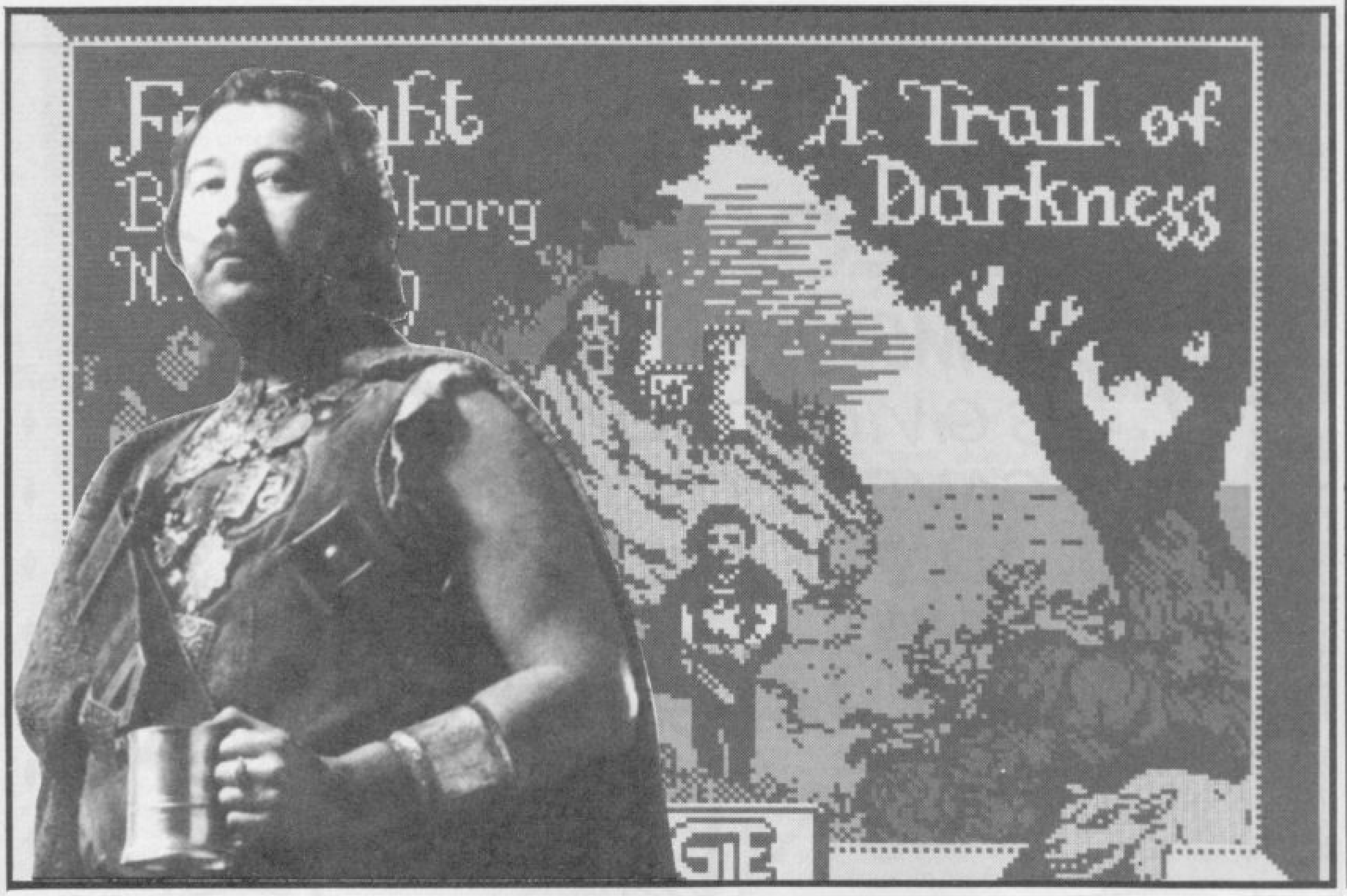
"I can't comment as I am putting all the facts before the FA Committee but Bury fielded more than 11 players in their away game against Orient."

"And the sacking. . .?"

"The players are, of course, over the moon."

"Was there no warning?"

"Well Elton, I knew I was in trouble after the chairman's vote of confidence in me"■



GORDO'S HELPLINE

As the winter blizzards set in up here at the Ogre, about the only thing I have to look forward to for a few months is the arrival of the express post-mules from Chateau EMAP.

Hopefully the next delivery will include a copy of **The Pawn** – the first adventure that really seems to make use of the memory of the 128 Spectrum.

If you're one of the lucky ones who owns a fancy big-brained machine like the PCW you'll already be familiar with the huge pleasures of games like **The Hitch-hiker's Guide, Zork** or even the luscious **Leather Goddesses of Phobos** –if you can drag your drooling old dad away from it! At last it looks as if Spectrum owners will be able to savour similar delights, provided Sugar Daddy can keep the sales figures up high enough on the new machine.

Let's face it, the old 48K Spectrum is a worthy enough machine but ties adventures down to the basics in most cases. Even when people like Level 9 are doing the writing. Acres of description, vastly complex scenarios and ultra-smart responses to clever-dick inputs are out of its range. Not so with the 128, especially with text-only games, and my own prediction for '87 is that adventuring will never have been better, so long as the software barons take up the gauntlet.

Amateur writers too should be in their element if Gilsoft's **Professional Adventure Writing System** lives up to its promises and it may soon be very difficult to tell the difference between a game like **The Pawn** and many home-made efforts, as long as their creators use the full capabilities of the 128 and of their imaginations.

Anyway, enough of prophecy and on to some insider advice on

Fairlight II

from D G W Griffith of Cheltenham.

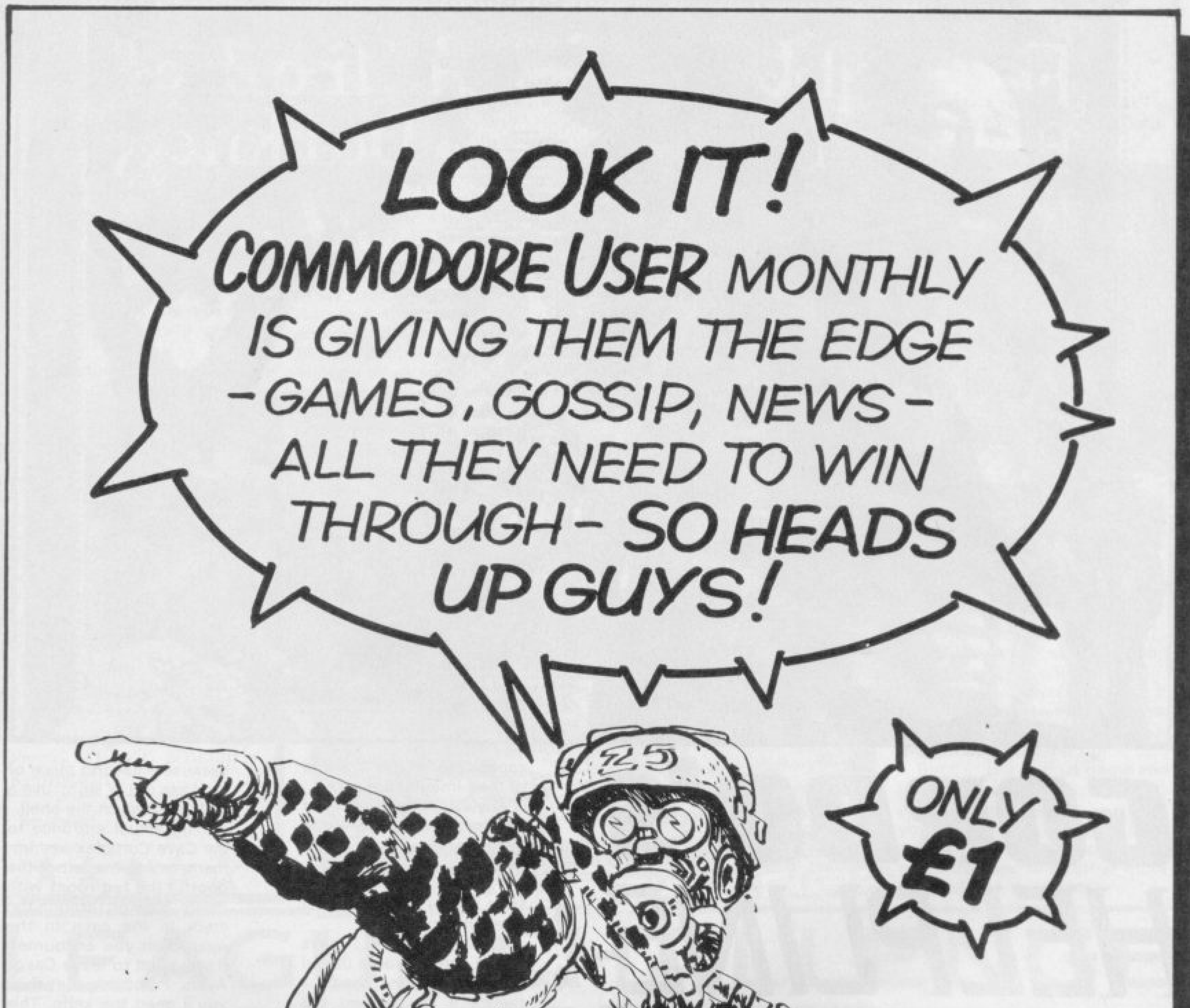
"Just a few lines," says he "to convey some useful information. On Screen 1 there's a key behind the bush to the side of the castle door. This will open the locked door in the Cave Complex which contains a piece of food, a barrel and what seems to be a wand – though I don't yet know what use this is.

"Three screens down and four to the right, there's an easily overlooked bottle of wine in the bottom corner at the first subterranean entrance. Don't jump down the trapdoor in the second subterranean entrance – four screens down, usually guarded by a dog. There is a key beneath the stones but exit can only be made via a secret door by the stones. This can be entered in a red room guarded by an orc within the Cave Complex proper and in which there's a barrel with yet another key. This isn't the correct key though – the real one is in a storeroom with two shelves. There's also food on these shelves – search them well because a second piece of food lies out of sight. use a rock to jump on the shelf.

"The actual entrance to the Cave Complex lies immediately to the left of the door in the red room with its orc. Now go through the crack in the cave in the next room you encounter. If you want to leave Castle Avars Point on the ship, you'll need the knife. This is behind a locked door that can be opened with the Storeroom key – Red Room, Trapdoor, knife on edge of trapdoor. Take the knife, exit the room, turn into the room on the left, avoid guard and straight on to a courtyard. Go through the door on the left of the yard in the upper part of the screen. Straight on again to the next courtyard. Move directly across and you should enter a moving-platform and potion room. Carry on in the direction you entered. As you exit this screen go to the top of screen left in case you fall off the bridge.

"From here you can go to the ship on the northern tip of the beach – go up. Now use the knife. This is where you load up Part 2 in the 48K version. Once you arrive in Nadir be prepared to fight as there's an orc guarding the quay.

Finally, does anyone know how to use the wand mentioned earlier or the


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star-shaped objects that fly and pulsate when dropped? So far the only use I've found is to drop one between two stools – this enables Isvar to climb split level rooms." any answers, chaps? Let's have them by return.

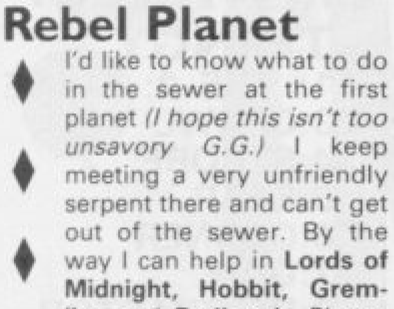
Now on to Lisbon where Francisco Assis Rosa is busy beating his brains out with a laser pistol. Squeaks Franky:

"I need help in

Rebel Planet

I'd like to know what to do in the sewer at the first planet *(I hope this isn't too unsavory G.G.)* I keep meeting a very unfriendly serpent there and can't get out of the sewer. By the way I can help in **Lords of Midnight, Hobbit, Gremlins** and **Redhawk**. Please send 50p to cover postage."

This, as I understand it, is a bad case of being down the tubes but there is a way out of both problems. The sewers are a short way from the docks on Tropos, roughly in the same area you'll find a vandalised visi-phone. Although your intergalactic phonecard won't be much use you should examine the place carefully – a sewer cover lies there. This can be removed 13,1,8 and should provide a suit-



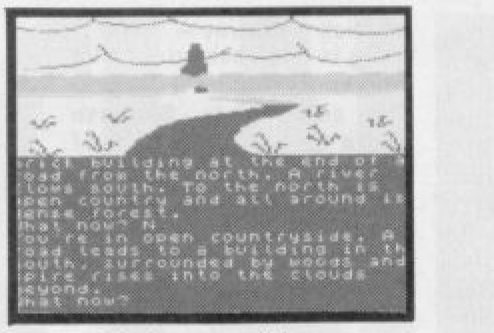
able exit for later on.

Serpents are another matter. If there's one thing they hate it's intense flashing lights. You can either try and run for it when you meet the beast or 15,4,11. Both the items of equipment you need can be found in the cos-mop, located N,NE from the sewer cover. If you want to take up Franky's offer of help write to him at Praca de Alvalade No.2 10-dto, 1700 Lisboa, Portugal.

P Hazelhurst, Warrington is suffering from a bad case of light deprivation in

Jewels of Darkness

"How do I get more batteries for the lamp in the **Colossal Adventure** section. I have found the vending machine but can't get any batteries out of it and my lamp keeps going out."



It is just possible to complete the game without the need for new batteries. It's difficult but always remember to turn the lamp off when you're in normal light – this saves on battery power. If you can't manage this you'll have to go to the Vending Machine in the Different Maze. To find it go S from the west end of the long passage and then climb. To actually get the batteries, first be in possession of the coins from down the well in the Building. All you need to do is drop them beside the vending machine. You'll then be given a new set – there's no need to go hunting for a slot.

Nick Garbutt of Newcastle asks of the same game: "How can I cross the troll bridge without losing treasure? The troll always expects something as a toll – does this mean I have to give up some of my loot. Also, is there any way past rockfalls?"

For a free crossing you should have the eggs from the Giant Room. They're special because they can return magically to the room if you say Fee, Fie, Foe, Foo – pressing *enter* between each. Although you'll still have to give them to the troll the magic words will allow you to recover them later – so, no loss of treasure. For a free return trip across the bridge try 14,1,5 and 10, 5 at the troll when you want to get back across. rockfalls? Don't bother, they're all impassable.

The Helm

It may be knocking on a bit now but it's actually a vey fine cheapo adventure. Here's the biz:

Unlock chest, Open chest, Look, Take knife, Drop key, S, W, W, Take hook, E, E, E, S, Cut rope with knife, Drop knife, Take rope, N, W, W, W, S, Tie rope, Use rope, Look, Take key, Drop rope, N, E, Unlock door (10%), Open door, S, Take showel, N, W, S, S, W, Read sign (excavate), Excavate, Look, Drop shovel, Take Board, E, N, N, Take bag, E, E, E, Take bulb, S, S, W, Take torch, E, Drop board, S, U, Take reed, D, W, Drop torch, E, U, S, S, s, Take salt, N, N, N, D, W, Use salt, Drop bag, Take torch, N, W, Take mirror, W, E, shine torch on mirror (20%), Drop torch, E, Take stones, W, W, Drop stones, N, N, Take spectacles, S, S, S, E, U, U, Drop mirror, D, Take board, U, Drop board, Take mirror, E, Use spectacles, Drop spectacles, Take needle, S, W, U, U, S, Drop bulb, drop mirror, N.D. Take dart, D, E, S, Insert dart, Use blowpie, Drop reed, Take Griffin, Say KAZAM, Drop Griffin (20%), Look, Take gramaphone, Insert needle, (Listen to tune – 1812 overture), Drop gramaphone, Take needle, Take diamond, Say KAZAM, N, W, U, U, S, Take bulb, Take mirror, Pick lock, Open door, S, W, W, Drop bulb, Drop needle, Drop diamond, Drop mirror, S, Examine drawing (battle of Hastings 1066), S, W, Take flour, E, S, E, Pull chain, Look, Take penny, d, Take sieve, Sift flour, Look, Take key, Drop sieve, Drop sace, N, N, E, D, S, S, Insert penny, W, Take wand, E, N, empty barrel, Take barrel, N, U, W, W, Drop barrel, Climb barrel, Take book, Unlock book, Open book (20%), Drop book, Drop wand, Take mirror, E, E, D, S, S, Say KAZAM, S, Use mirror, *Type* 2878 (1066 + 1812 = 2878), S, Take Helm, N, N, Say KAZAM, N, N, U, W, W, Drop mirror, Take diamond, Insert diamond, (20%), Take bulb, E, S, D, Take octopus, N, W, N, U, N, E, N, read sign, (10%), Drop Helm (100%). And that's it!'

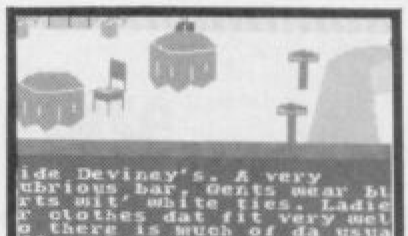


GORDO'S HELPLINE

The bizarre

Bugsy

seems to have held few terrors for Shaun Jowet of Hedon: "To finish Part 1, go into the bar. Buy the mask and remember to wear it when you protect the newsboys – but don't forget to take if off afterwards. Now buy a gun and rob the post office. After the robbery hire Louie and Muscles. with their help you can go to the pawn-



broker's and protect him too.

"From here go to the railway station, but a ticket from the clerk and then board the train. Enjoy your ride, get off and examine corpses. Do the same with the pocket. Go N on to the train again. On arriving back at the platform go S to the clothes shop and buy a police uniform. enter the warehouse, then the gunsmiths and buy the Tommy gun. To complete the part all you now need to do is rob the bank.

Unusually I've had a number of pleas about

THE QUICKIES

GOLDEN APPLE: Sorry, a rather late reply to Sgt Moore at Wildenrath who wants to know how the computer works – "I know the parrot says To Be, but how to input". Also how to pass the poison cloud and how to use the silver paint. For the computer 20,12. You need to 3 under the cloud. The paint is used to spray the glass at the safe – neutralising the opposition by making a mirror.

VALHALLA: Recently resurrected but still tough and surprisingly entertaining even now. David Davis can't find the first quest object, the key Ofnir. It's hidden in the northwestern section of Krank's Hall. You can get into the hall by going north from the most westerly plain in Midgard – but Boldir must be with you. Once inside you can only go NW when Krank is absent from the hall.

ESPIONAGE ISLAND The recurrent chestnut from Zoe Barnett, Horndean, Hants. "How do I get into the dark corner and what do I do with the native woman who seems to be deaf, blind and dumb?" All the answers lie in the darkness – 18,6 and then pull the string you find. Now you can 7,16 to the woman and be on your way.

THE BOGGIT: How to escape Goldbum and how to get the Ring from Boggit-man, Kidderminster. "To answer the riddle Say African or European – you'll find him SW of a location with exists SE,S and Sw. To get the ring go to a location that says 'Solid walls are S, SW, NE, West from here to find the ring. If you go to the Goblin's back door from here you go up to get out. You'll be up a tree – wait for the eagle to save you if you've got the egg.

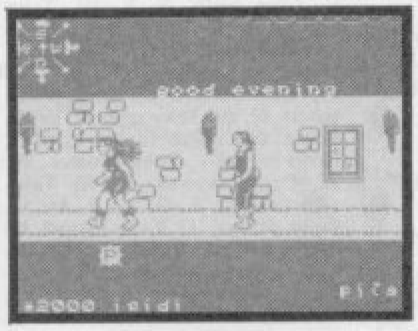


GORDO'S HELPLINE

Dun Darach

Gargoyle's Celtic mindbender. Michael Bottomley of Oldham sums up the drift of most of the requests: "I've got the scroll off Skar and have found the D-key. I'm now in the castle but just can't unlock the next door. I've tried every combination I can think of. Am I missing something simple? After a year on the city streets I need any help I can get." No, it's not exactly simple. To open the first locked door you must have the D-key, scroll and any other object. Go through into the next room which has three revolving wheels – these are a combination lock system. The combination id DPE but you'll need to solve the clue given by the scrip on the table to reach this answer. Basically you must drop objects on to the tables to stop the wheels at the right letters – keep Skar's scroll though and go through the door with it when the wheels have stopped.

There are now further mysterious messages and, on the face of it, insanely difficult clues. To help you on the way 2**25 means 2 to the power of 25 – use a calculator to find the number, which is a guidance system to get through rows of doors. Good luck, you'll need it!



INFORMATION EXCHANGE

● Shaun Jowett, he of the Bugsy clues, would like a penpal of 10 or 11 who'd like to swap hints and tips on adventures. He can offer help with **Hobbit, Boggit, Circus, Hulk, LOTR, Mural** and **Microman.** write to 21, Inmans Road, Hedon, nr Hull HU12 8NQ.

● Jonathan Cole, a dweller at 13 Laski Court, Dalton Close, Broadfield, Crawley RH11 9JN will assist with **Knight Tyme, HOTM, Hobbit, Fairlight** and **Tir Na Nog**. He'd also like to know how to get into the micro-jet in the fairly ancient **Atlas Assignment** – I did this once myself but it was so long ago I've forgotten. Anyway you only end up in some crummy arcade sequence which is irritating as hell and gets in the way of the real game.

● Nick Callaway – "your mag is ace" asks me to let you know that he'll sell you the solution to **Seabase Delta** for the paltry sum of 20p plus an sae. Cheques, well whatever, to 48 Ash Drive, North Bradley, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 0SN.

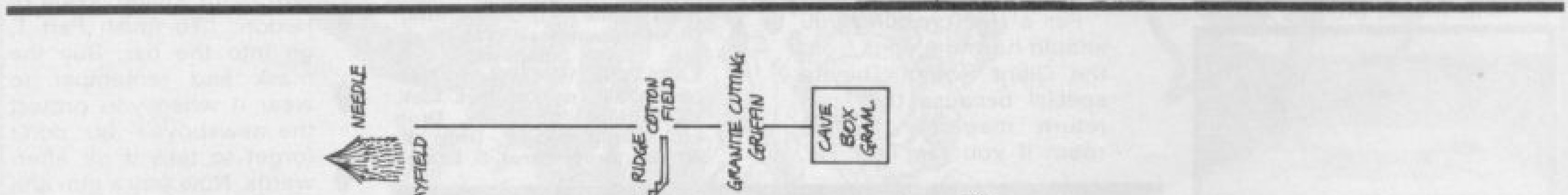
● Now, what I need meself is a solution to **Twin Kingdom Valley.** Any chance? Honorable and prominent mention given to any benefactor. If you are familiar with the game please let Michale Brooks, aged 8, of Copplestone, Furze Field Road, East Grinstead RH19 2JN know how to get the desert king's treasure chest. He's mightily stuck and desperate. Trouble is I don't even have a copy of this early masterpiece.

See you next moon.

GORDO GREATBELLY,
Landlord
The Dancing Ogre Pub

GREATBELLY'S THINGY

1: THE 2: SHINE
3:CRAWL
4:STROBE
5:BEAR
6:CORNER
7:GIVE
8:DELTRACTOR
9:BLOW
10:THROWING
11:ON 12:2B
13:WITH
14:TAKING
15:SWITCH
16:BEADS
17:TORCH 18:FEEL
19:OPEN 20:TYPE
21:MISTAKE!
22:HORN
23:CHEST.



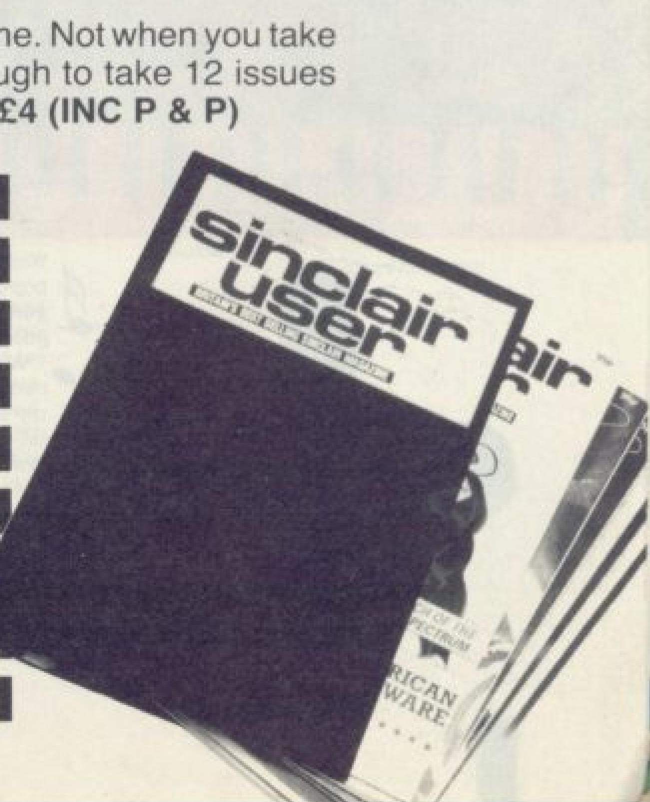
THE HELM

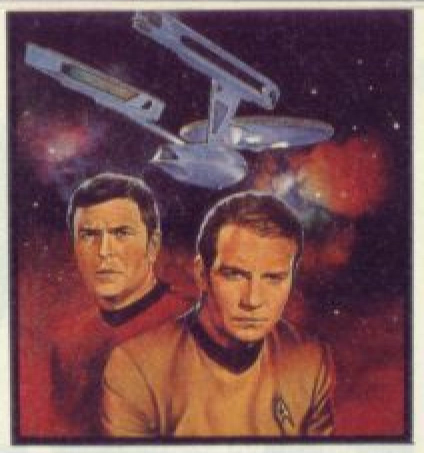
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ÖUTLA

Bong! What's all this then? You may well ask. And if you did, we'd tell you that it's a little light relief from staring at a keyboard and a horde of pixels. Herein we impart info on the following: Wargames! Comics! Board Games! Videos! Coin-Ops! Films! TV! Role Playing Games! Cheap tech! and other Things That Refused To Be Categorised!!

FANTASY AND SF MOVIES

Star Trek the game, from Beyond may still be looking a long way off, but Paramount is still on course to launch *Star Trek IV – The Voyage Home* in April. Kirk and co are left on Vulcan and they'll be court martialed if they go back to Earth. But, civilisation is threatened by a mysterious cylinder from outer space and the crew must go back to 1987 to capture some great blue whales. There must be a porpoise to this somewhere.

Our spies tell us its the strongest plot of the series and Paramount has signed for a fifth film to be directed by Kirk himself, William Shatner.

Still on the space frontier, George A. Romero, of *Day of the Dead* and *Creepshow* fame, is tipped to produce a new version of H G Wells' *War of the Worlds.* The plan is to take the story plot of the original 1940's film, in which the Martians invade Earth, and up date it with some stunning *Star Wars*-type effects

Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is destined for the big screen – renamed *The Hitchhiker.* It'll be scripted by Adams, produced by David Putnam, and directed by the creators of Max Headroom!! Sounds weird!!

Movie butts can get all the gen on these and other films as well as books, posters, soundtracks and videos from Movie Fair '87. The convention'll be on March 14 at New Ambassadors Hotel, 12 Upper Woburn Place London WC1.

QUIRK OF THE MONTH

For a year or so BT has been operating, or allowing others to operate a series of telephone services so bizarre that details of them may not be printed in this magazine.

One that can involves the high pitched frolicsome, not to say fat, astrologer Russell Grant has inaugurated (in the London area only at the moment) what may be the first computerised, interactive telephone service.

GRAHAM TAYLOR

CHEAP TECH!

This month I'm looking at cheap music tech.

The Casio CZ-101 synth is still a bargain at around £250, offering great digital sounds, portability and MIDI interfacing.

Cheaper are MIDI expanders without keyboards. Try the Korg EX-800 synth (now discontinued but available second-hand at around £100) or the Preset-sound Roland Sound Plus at £149

And, if you own Cheetah Sound Sampler or Ram Music Machine, try the Star Sounds sampling tapes. Hundreds of super brass, string, percussion and vocal sounds on metal cassettes. Contact Syndromic Music on 01-444 9126.

Try a Chord Computer if your musical ambition outstrips your technical expertise. For £24.95 this calculator-style unit will display the keys you need to press to form any popular chord – versions for guitars (spit) too, from all good music shops.



And if any musical instrument is beyond your budget, try the ultimate in Heavy Metal Posing – the inflatable Blow Hard guitar. I kid you not! For around £12 you can own your own Strat, Les Paul or Flying V in a selection of psychedelic colours!! Just talk to Blue Suede music on 0302-841274 for the low-down... ■

CHRIS JENKINS

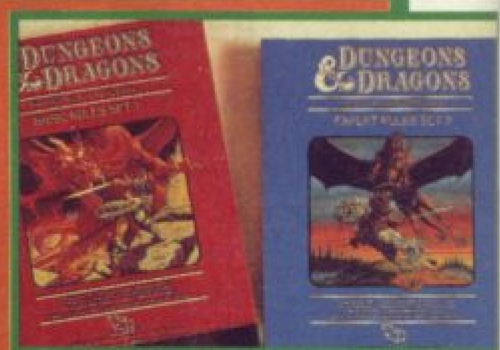
FANTASY/RPG

There's a healthy cross-over between computer gaming and role playing gaming. So for the benefit of those SU readers who do play – and even more for the benefit of those who don't but who should it they have half a brain – here's the latest news from the world of cardboard counters.

This month, it's what's new from Games Workshop and from TSR.

GW recently released *Warhammer Fantasy Role Play,* derived from the fantasy wargaming rules of much the same name.

Also soon to come from GW: *The Enemy within,* the first in a series of scenarious for Warhammer FRP: *Bloodbowl,* fantasy football – who needs The Refrigerator when you can have a frost giant?



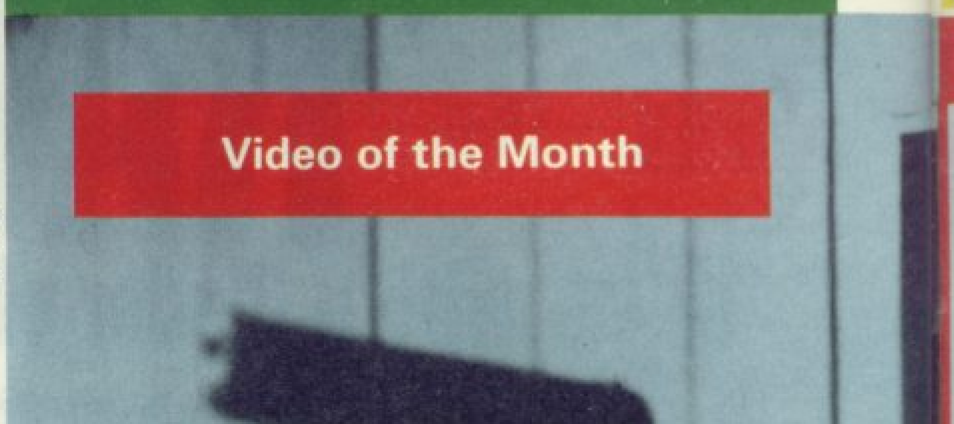
TSR (UK), the British arm of the company which brought you *Dungeons & Dragons,* is set to bring you... more *Dungeons & Dragons!*

The big upcoming event is likely to be *The Manual of the Planes.*

Also planned for soon is *Red Sonya Unconquered,* an *AD&D* scenario set in Hyborea, the world *Conan* comes from■

GARY ROOK

Video of the Month



Video of the Month:
At Close Range (Sean Penn, Christopher Walken. RCA Columbia)

Largely ignored by the public when it appeared in the cinema last year, *At Close Range* was described by reviewers as the most powerful thriller of recent years. It's a shame people don't pay more attention to the press. Penn *(Falcon and the Snowman, T.A.P.S.)* plays the son of returning Brad Whitewood Snr, (Chris Walken) leader of a robbery gang. Separated from his father for most of his life, Brad Jnr is in awe of the apparently easy life of crime. After being taken into the gang, Brad becomes rapidly disillusioned as he learns of his father's psychotic leanings. He tries to rebel, but is drawn into a whirlpool of family loyalty and criminal reprisals.

Foley's direction is bold and clean, Walken's performance is just manic enough and Penn's Brad Jnr is completely believable■

ANDS

COIN-OP OF THE MONTH

TOP 10 COIN-OPS/MARCH

Out Run	Sega
Shackled	Data East
Gryzor	Konami
Side Arms	Capcom
Soldier of Light	Taito
Bubble Bobble	Taito
Nemesis	Konami
Valtric	Taito
Championship Sprint	Atari
Victory Road	SNK

Chart compiled with the help of one arcade in London's West End, and is not necessarily the case country-wide. Thanks to John Stergides at Electrocoin

The stars of this year's ATEI show – the UK an international coin-op exhibition were undoubtedly *WEC Le Mans* and *Out Run* – two fantastic racing simulations which I looked at last month.



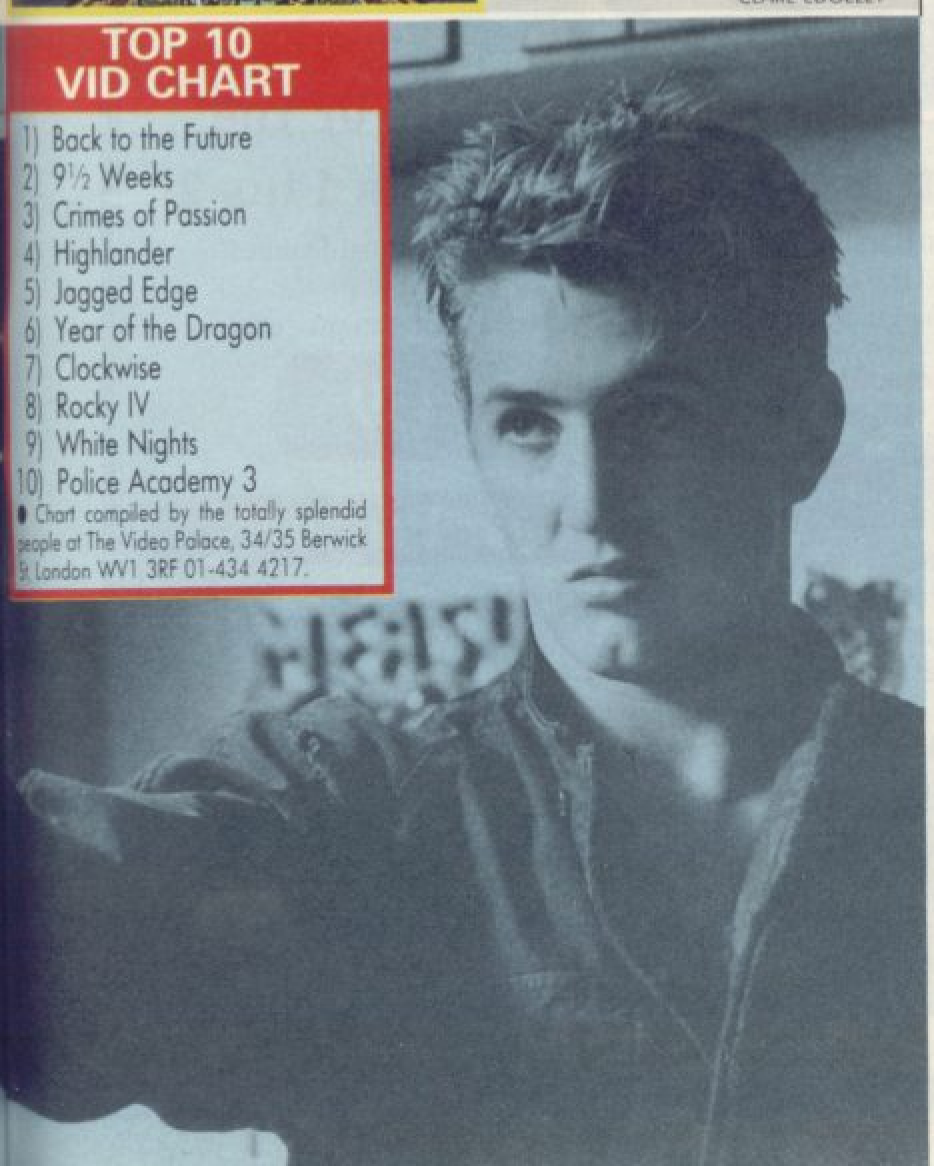
Of the hundreds of new games on show one which took my fancy was Bally Sente's *Night Stocker*. It's a clever mixture of driving sim and shoot 'em up and actually has a steering wheel and laser gun on the cabinet.

The idea is to whiz through a series of landscapes taking pot shots at a host of moving nasties – these mostly come in the flying variety. Huge mutant mosquitoes are the first hazard you'll meet.

But that's only half the fun. You've got to concentrate on driving through rugged territory avoiding outcrops of rocks and other obstacles.

Night Stocker's fast, full action, and above all it's unique with it's dual play theme. Definitely worth a shot!■

CLARE EDGELEY



TOP 10 VID CHART

1) Back to the Future
2) 9½ Weeks
3) Crimes of Passion
4) Highlander
5) Jagged Edge
6) Year of the Dragon
7) Clockwise
8) Rocky IV
9) White Nights
10) Police Academy 3

• Chart compiled by the totally splendid people at The Video Palace, 34/35 Berwick St, London WV1 3RF 01-434 4217.



COMICS 'N' MAGS

What do you think of when you hear the name Batman? Chances are it's na-na-na-na-na-na-na-Batman, the comic TV series of the late sixties. All weird supervillains like Catwoman, The Penquin, Joker, and that dreadful Robin.

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns *(DC Comics/Titan Books) is nothing like that. It's 20 years from now. Batman has been in retirement for that long. Robin has married and moved to California, Commissioner Gordon is seventy.*

Superman has become a CIA hit-man, a sad echo of truth, justice and the American Way.

And Gotham City after dark belongs to the Mutants, a mega-streetgang. Members have a quota of crimes to fill with senseless acts like putting grenades in house-wives' handbags.

Finally, something snaps inside Bruce Wayne, and he dons the bat costume again, returning to the crusade against evil that began when his parents were gunned down by a mugger 40 years before...

Where the TV Batman was one-dimensional, the new comic version is deep – very deep■

AIR WAVES

Great news for fans of **Ghostbusters** ***and*** **Teenwolf.** ***They're the subjects of two spanking new cartoon TV series. Also in production, a new series of*** **Masters of the Universe** ***and, yawn upon yawn,*** **Transformers.**

Also on the TV scene, Jason the mass murderer is to get his own series!! Californian rumours have it that Paramount is having trouble selling the with Friday the 13th The TV series to us Brits, but it's likely that we'll see that famous hockey mask on our screens early next year.

The new (and final??) series of **Dr Who** ***enters production in April. But the new Doctor has yet to be found***■

JOHN GILBERT

WARGAMES

For the straight board gamers who may have tuned in by accident, TSR's subsidiary SPI is still churning out boardgames. I've recently been sent the last two copies of *Strategy & Tactics* magazine – a great read plus every issue includes a board game. The last two were S&T107, *Warsaw Rising* – the gallant Polish Home Army rebels against the German occupying forces and seizes half the city in anticipation of the Russian enetry into Warsaw. . . and S&T108, *Remember the Maine!* which nobody in England does, since it was an American warship which blew up, sparking off the Spanish American War. remember that one? Sure you do. Even if both are rather esoteric topics, they seem to be up to the usual SPI standard – nice to see after a rough patch a couple of years back■

GARY ROOK



READ THIS!

The paperback book of the month has to be Peter Straub's *Full Circle*. The storyline is simple enough, a mother thinks her young daughter's come back from the grave, but Straub's command of the horror art makes for chilling reading.

On the hardback scene get *Equal Rites*, by *Colour of Magic* author Terry Pratchett. It's about a woman wizard – ergo the title – and her battle to get on to equal terms with male wizards, such as Twoflower. It's published by Gollancz■

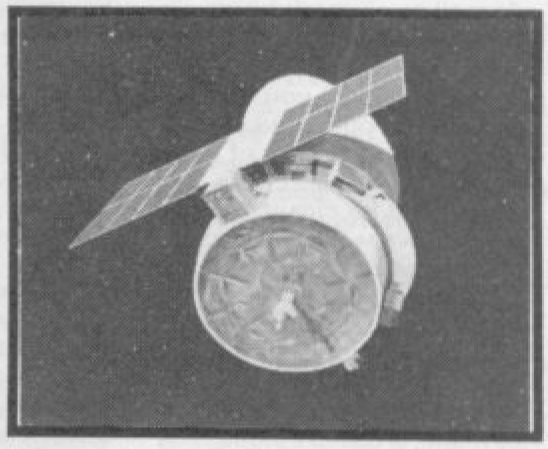
JOHN GILBERT

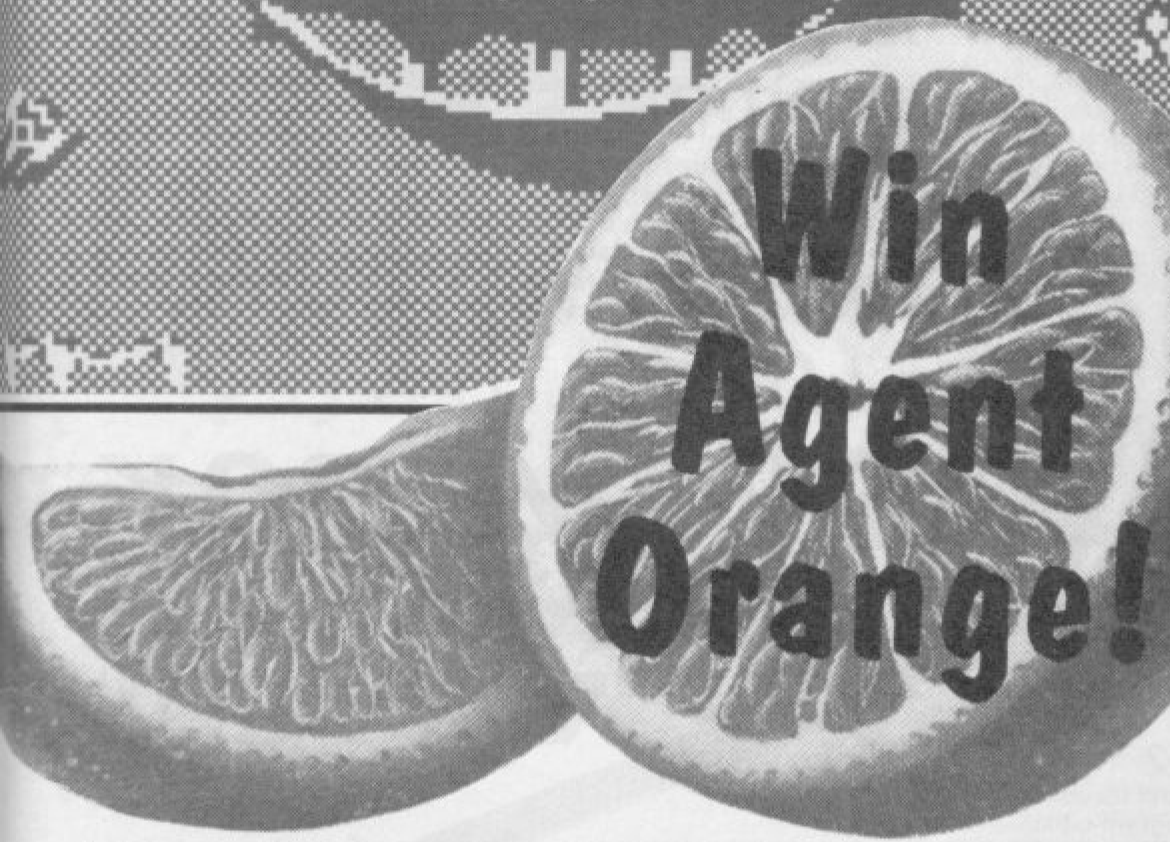

Vulcan, by the author of Arnhem and Desert Rats, simulates the Tunisian Campaign in 1942-43 from the arrival of the 'Torch' Task Force and their race for Tunis, to the final battle of 'Operation Vulcan'. Game Features: Hidden movement on a mountainous terrain, scrolling map, 5 scenarios, air attack phase, strong computer opponent and 5 armies.
VULCAN
SPECTRUM 48K & 128K – £9.95
Available Mail Order by return from
Cases Computer Simulations Ltd.,
14 Langton Way, London SE3 5TL.
Tel: 01-858 0763 & W. H. Smith

COMPETITION



I am sorry about this being on a black and white page I'm not colour blind. Blame the Ed.





Don't be a lemon, check out these juicy prizes. They're all part of our crazy compo to find the intergalactic fertiliser king!

First Prize. A sackful of tasty goodies worth over £100. Just imagine a range of odd-ball orange items including an orange Sony Walkman with a collection of orange-related LP's . . . an orange T-shirt, joystick, strides, and a whole lot more. We've included a cuddly toy. Oh, and a copy of A'N'F's Agent Orange.

Second Prize. Twenty copies of the wondrous Agent Orange, the scrolling blast-about-and-harvest-them-crops-job, reviewed in this issue.

Third Prize. Consolation for thirty runners up who each receive an orange — no, not the fruit. The chocky.



WHAT TO DO

Just sort out the fruit from the non-fruit in the list below.

- Paw-Paw ☐
- Orange ☐
- Grape ☐
- Rhubarb ☐
- Tomato ☐
- Baked Beans ☐
- Olive ☐

Tick the boxes opposite the non-fruits — and be careful, it's a toughy — and send your entry to Orange Bits 'n' Pieces Compo, Sinclair User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by March 30, 1987.

Name..

Address...

....

....

Suckers from EMAP and Argus Press Software can't take part in this one

OPEN THE BOX
GAME HACKING EXPOSED

No, we're not telling you how to leap under speeding cars or leap off high buildings with impunity – it's much better than that.

If you've succumbed to the spell of gameplaying you'll have notice a small snag in the great scheme of things, namely death.

As well as all those aliens kicking the cosmic bucket, there's usually a little something in it for you too.

And when you're dead, you can't partake of the joy of zaps no more.

Wouldn't it be nice if, just if, you could wave a magic wand and acquire immunity to Them, while They were just as vunerable as before to you. Such magic would be, well, useful.

And it just happens to exist. This magic is called **Poking,** and it consists of customising a game to your precise specification lifewise.

Pokes (see SU, Feb) are changes that you make to a game to stop it removing a valuable life just because you happened to blunder into some rock. They can also give you infinite shields, energy or time – whatever the essential commodity is that keeps you going in a particular game.

Just as every game is different the pokes for every game are different too. However, most games do things in much the same way when it comes to scoring and keeping tags on your lifeforce. Programmers are human too, and when they've spent six months getting the graphics and animation just right they're not going to worry about getting clever with the boring old bits. Especially when the game is two months overdue (and it nearly always is).

Even better, the truly organised gamesmith tends to have a collection of standard life and death code which he/she can plumb into everything he writes. So the avid poker (pokester?) can soon learn what to look for, and where to look for it. And, as soon as a little experience is tucked under the asteroid belt, recognise individual styles and tricks of the software authors. That's in the future, though. The magic word is experience.

But everyone starts somewhere. Like here, for example.

Stage 1

Before you can go delving into the innards of some carefully crafted code, you've got to get it on to the operating table. To turn the medical analogy into a bit of veterinary dentistry, if you want to pull the teeth of a charging lion, you've got to stop it charging first... And the Spectrum equivalent of an anaesthetic dart in the flank is the ever-so wonderful **Merge** command. It's less painful, too.

All Spectrum games are saved on to tape in such a way as to automatically run when they're loaded. Once a program starts to run it can do what it likes to the computer, and number one on it's list is stopping the user from fiddling. So you'll find if you try and press **Break** after a program starts, all you get is a black screen. No program, no listing, no game. This is called a crash, and you'll meet a lot of these when you start in the **Poke** game.

The idea, then, is to stop a program from getting going.

The Merge command was originally designed to allow people to mix a Basic program in the computer with a Basic program on tape. As a side effect it stops the program that's on tape from running, and that's what we want. If you don't have any program in the computer when you type **Merge**"", then the result will be a program loaded in from tape, mixed with nothing, and ready to edit.

So stage 1 is to type **Merge**"" and **then** load the game.

Stage 2

Press enter and up comes the short Basic program which loads in the main bank of the machinest code for the game.

What you see when you press **Enter** to start editing is pretty varied, but there are a couple of tried and tested themes you're likely to come across in some form.

The first and simplest, and the one we're going to look at in detail, is the simple 'two **Load Codes** and a **Randomize Use**' ploy.

This means that the small Basic program you've got in front of you (known as the loader) loads in the loading screen, then loads in the main lump of game code, and finally leaps willy-nilly into the code to start the game running.

The second method is more tricky. This will have just one **Load Code**, and one **Randomize User**, and will just load in a special bit of tape software. This bit of machine code will probably load the game in faster, allow fancy animated loading screens and be almost impossible to get past. In fact, it is possible to **Poke** in such an unfriendly environment, but it needs some experience of machine code and the ways of the world. So for now we'll stick to the first type.

Stage 3

Now you're ready to **Poke** into the program to give yourself infinite lives. This is different for nearly every game but follows roughly the same idea from game to game. Let's look at an actual example to see what to do.

Infinite lives – a real example

For this little dissertation, the golden oldie **Manic Miner** will be under the scalpel.

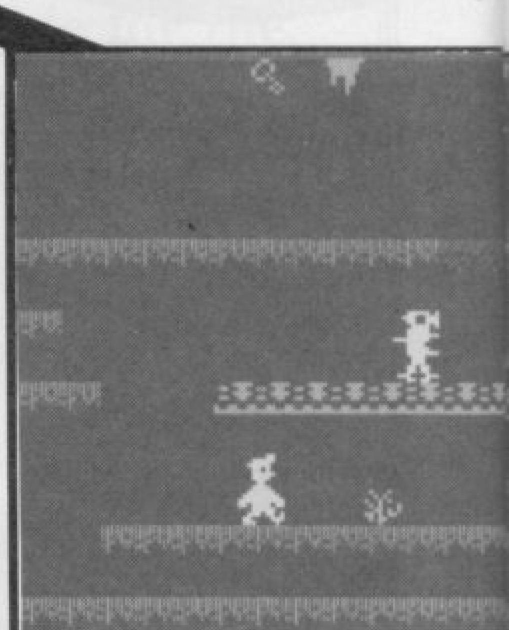
Yes, I know that compared with **Strike Force Harrier** and **Staglider MM** might seem a little ludicrous, but it'll do to show off what I'm burbling on about. And it's not a bad game at all. I got it out of hibernation of two years just to do the **Pokes**, and this piece very nearly didn't get written...

Manic Miner is a perfect example of the first type of loader. If you look at the listing on your screen – once you've **Merged** the loader – you'll see first of all a **Clear** command. This makes space for the machine code to come, and the number following it is usually close to the point where the machine code that's coming in a minute starts. Then follow a couple of **Ink** and **Paper** commands, to set up the screen, and the **Load**"" **Codes** we mentioned. Finally, there's the **Randomize User** command.

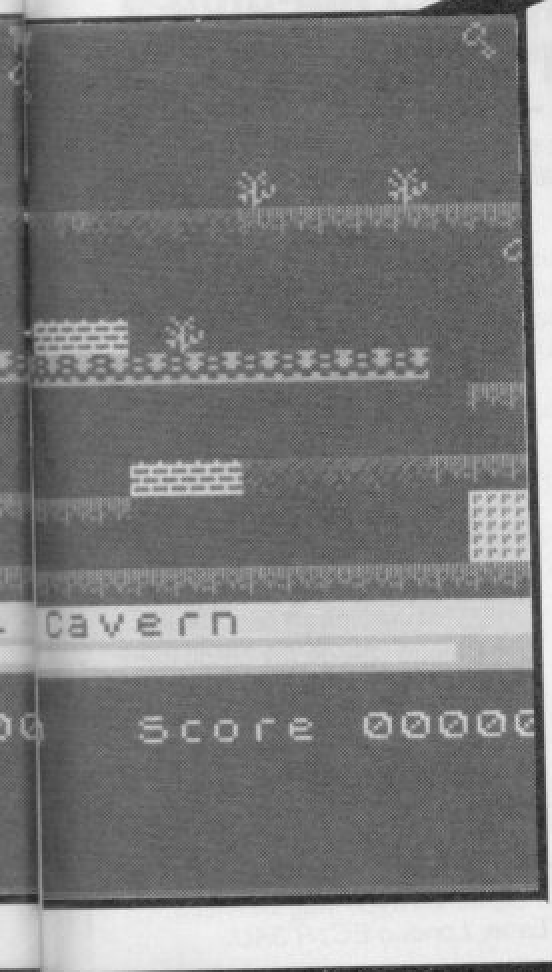
Most games have a little bit of cleverness in the loader to try and stop you editing it. The commonest trick is to put some embedded colour controls in the first line (yer wot?). Embedded control codes are just like **Ink** and **Paper**, except that they can be in any part of the line, and work immediately. So an embedded **Ink** 7 code right after a line number will turn all of the following Basic line white, and if **Paper** is white too you won't be able to read anything. You can still **Edit** the line though, and insert your own control codes to switch the **Ink** and **Paper** back to something sensible.

128K+2 and Plus 2 owners have things a lot easier, mind. Their editor just ignores embedded control codes.

Another nasty little trick is to put the entire program on one line, and make that Line 0. This stops the Spectrum editing it altogether, and on the 128K+2 generates some very strange effects. But **Poke** 23765,10 usually fixes it. Again, 128K+2 owners have a better time of it. They can just select **Renumber** from their menu, and that'll sort everything out. Incidently, don't worry about using the 128 Basic editor on programs that only work properly in 48K. As long as you only edit the program, and type Spectrum (or save it to tape) before running it, it should be just dandy.



The SU guide to practical immortality



So you can see what the loader is doing. Amonst other little bits (like 'Marblehorn Herse thank you for not pirating this game') you might see lying about, there will probably be stuff like **Poke** 23659,0 might see lying about, there will probably be stuff like **Poke** 23659,0 and similar. These are traps for the unwary. As well as stopping **Break** working – the above **Poke** – they can nobble the editor and make your life as a **Poker** short and pointless. Some games even check that the **Pokes** have been run and meanly crash if they haven't. So you'd better not remove these **Pokes** for now. Just make sure that you don't **Run** the program before you've done the open heart surgery on the game proper. Which you do like this.

First, find out how many **Load"" Codes** there are in the loader.

The first one will be the screen, so you can wind past the next part of the tape with the picture itself on. A few games use the loading screen as part of the playing area, so this method won't work too well with them. But they're not common.

With **Manic Miner**, there are just the two **Loads**, so we know that all the game is held on one block of code.

So type **Load"" Code** as a direct command, and allow the game to load in. At the end, instead of the familiar starting screen springing to life, you'll get the even more familiar 0 OK, 0:0 Basic message.

You now have The Game at your mercy.

Savour this feeling of power – the hard work's just around the proverbial corner... At this point, it's a very good idea to save the code on to tape (or microdrive/disc).

This means that you can get it back for experimental purposes without all that hassle you've just been through.

Now the fun begins. As you get more experience, you'll probably feel the need to buy (or write!) a disassembler. This takes the raw code, and turns it into a form which is easier for an average human to understand. But for the moment, the Spectrum manual (48K or 128K+2) has all the information you'll need. Unfortunately the Spectrum Plus and Spectrum 128 manuals are useless for this job, and owners of those two machines should try and borrow the former's book.

What to look for? Well, it's a fair bet that when you lose a life, or dispose of a bit of energy, the Z80 inside the Spectrum makes a note of the fact by subtracting a little from some number it's holding in the Spectrum's memory. It can then check this number, and if it's got to zero inform you smugly that you've lost. Again.

It's possible to stop it realising when something gets to zero, but generally it's easier to prevent that number counting down in the first place.

There are various ways in which the Z80 subtracts numbers, but the easiest, fastest and most economical in terms of memory are a group of commands called the decrements, or decs. These do a number of things, but in essence they take one away from a number, and tell the Z80 if this makes the number zero. Just what a games' writer needs.

If you look in the part of your Spectrum manual devoted to the list of the character set, you'll notice tables of machine-code instructions, which are the Z80's commands. This isn't the time to go into the niceties of machine code, but you should notice popping up from time to time things like dec a, dec bc and dec (hl). This last, code 53, is the one which is probably used most often. And, more to the point, it's the one used in **Manic Miner**.

Dec (hl) is a command to take one away from a number held in one byte of memory. It's a bit like **Poke** 53540, **(Peek 53540)**–1, and the address of the byte is held in an area of the Z80 called h1. The brackets in the dec (hl) mean that the computer shouldn't take one away from hl itself, but rather the byte of memory that (hl) hold the address of.

Complicated? Don't worry. It's not too important to understand all this at the moment, but unless the Poker-to-be gets a bit of the ideas behind the game, things get difficult.

So, how to find our dec (hl). We know that it has a code of 53, so we can write a little Basic program to whizz through the code and find all occurences of the number. Trouble is, the command tends to be useful for a lot of things, and the number can also mean other things to the computer like sprite data. So it can crop up quite a few times in 32K of code. However, the crafty **Poker** will be aware that dec (hl) is usually followed by a machine code **Goto** (called a jump, or jp) if (hl) got to zero and the player died. The Z80 code for jump if the last thing it did had zero as a result is called jp z.

Back to the back of the Spectrum manual, and voila! Code 202 is jp z, NN. The NN, by the way, stands for two bytes that are the address which it jumps to, and ain't so important. So we've got to look for a number 202 followed (after two bytes for the address) by 53.

This is one way to do it – there are faster:

```
10 CLEAR 30000
20 LOAD "" CODE
30 FOR F=30001 TO 65535
40 IF PEEK F<>53 THEN GO
```

IDIOT'S GUIDE TO POKES

```
40 IF PEEK F<>202 THEN GO TO 70
50 IF PEEK (F+3)<>53 THEN GO TO 70
60 PRINT "Code at"; F
70 NEXT F
80 PRINT "Finished!": STOP
```

Line 10 stops Basic from interfering with the code you're going to load in Line 20. this is the code just checks for 202 – dec (hl) – and, if it finds that, 53 – jp z, it then prints any code just checks for 53 – dec (hl) – and, if it finds that, 202 – jp z. It then prints any address that matches. This will probably contain the code that ticks off a life...

All that remains to write the Poke. Fortunately, it's very easy to tell the Z80 to do nothing for a bit. The code 0 – NOP – means precisely that, so we just write over the bit of code we've found with zeros. POKE (35133), 0: POKE (35134), 0: POKE (35135), 0: POKE (35136), 0 takes care of that.

Then save the new code on to tape.

Now get the original tape, and load the game as usual. When the screen finishes loading, swap the tape for the one with your misbegotten masterpiece on. Then play the tape and load the doctored data.

When the game starts, deliberately die. As well as confusing the aliens no end, you'll be able to see immediately whether you got the right bit of memory or not. If everything continues as it did before, then keep dieing until you run out of lives. If the game stops as usual, or crashes in twenty different types of black then you've missed the vital point in the program and hit something else.

This is where you have to be a little ingenious, and look for other mortality mechanisms. In particular, the jp z might not follow immediately after the dec (hl), or it might be a call z,nn (which does something similar to a jp z) or even a jr z,n (similar again). All the codes are in the back of the Spectrum manual, but if you're going to **Poke** in dead earnest the least you'll need will be a 'Z80 machine code for your Spectrum' book.

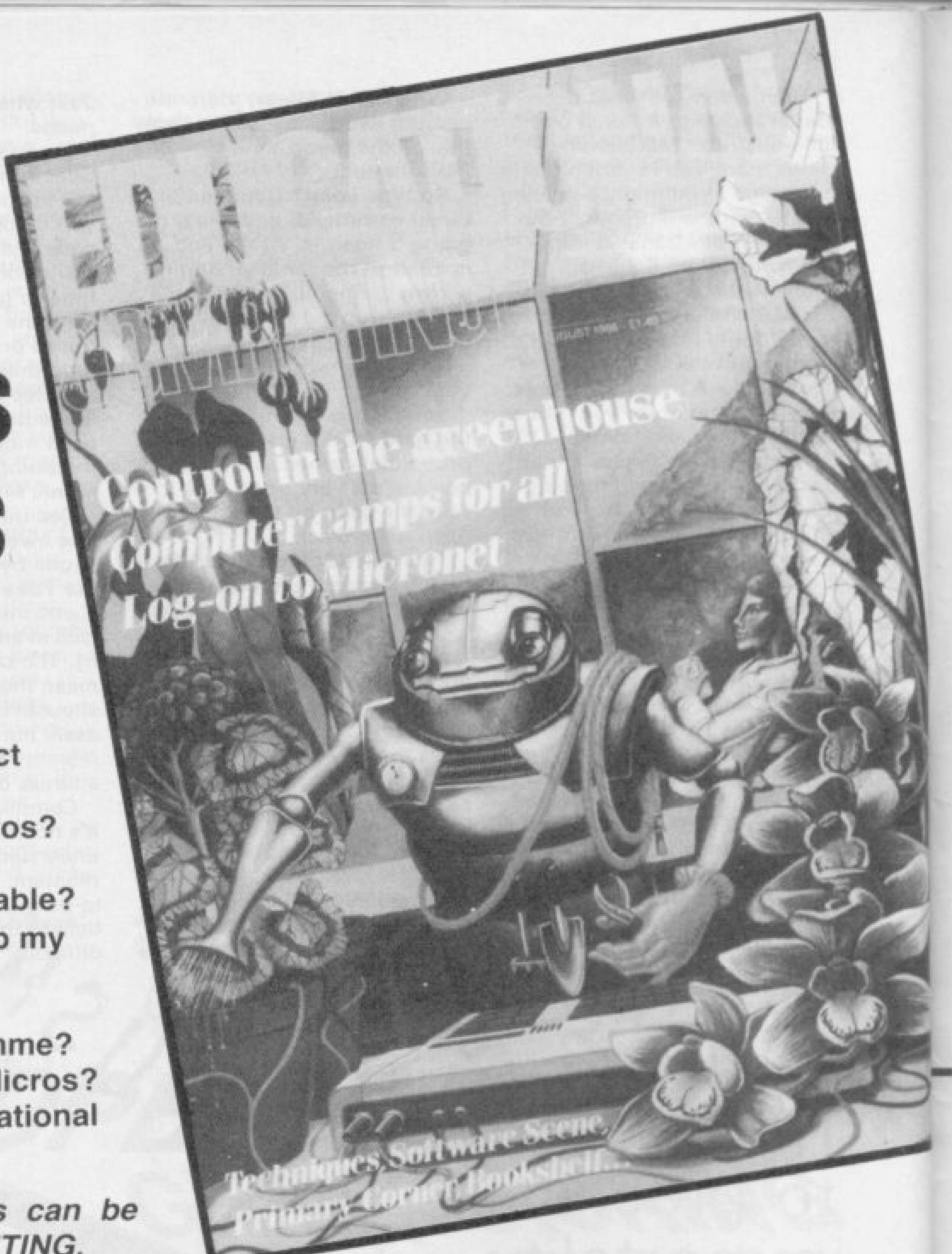
But if it works – whoopie! The final step is to install the four **Pokes** in the loader. Usually just before the **Randomize User** command. Then save the loader in place of the original one, and you have your very own hacked game.

And there's a whole world full of others, just waiting for you to pit your wits against.

Hacking into games can be more fun than playing the thing! ■

This is the magazine that answers the questions

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EDUCATIONAL COMPUTING

ADVENTURE REVIEW

APACHE GOLD

Legend of Apache Gold is one of two adventures written using the **Graphic Adventure Creator** by Incentive Software.

For anyone who hasn't read the review of Winter Wonderland (elsewhere this issue), Incentive's **GAC** is their version of Gilsoft's **Quill**.

Apache Gold is at least reasonably original. I can only think of one other adventure off hand that is set in the Wild West. But at the same time, it's a little too regimented. Things are very neat. In an adventure like this, you get the idea that someone has sat down and worked out the best solution. There's nothing really spontaneous or particularly inventive about it.

The story is as follows: you, Luke Warme, are a cowboy down on your luck. Hearing of a legend that says that the Apaches bury gold with their dead chiefs, and knowing that one has just died, you decide to do a quick bit of grave robbing. Not, I would have thought, particularly heroic, but then Luke seems hardly John Wayne material.



So here you are in your dusty wagon. The first problem is to get the horse moving: the second is to escape the apaches who turn up. Actually, I'm not sure that you are supposed to escape them, as you get transported to their encampment remarkably quickly. Plus, it's very easy to escape the one guard they've left behind. This Indian at least seems more like one from the Beano than any real threat.

You then find, much to your surprise that the Indians have gone out hunting lunch. You know this because they have left you a note telling you. This means that you are at liberty to explore the encampment and the surrounding countryside – a place of magic, mystery and some very strange furniture.

The game plays well enough, and the graphics are OK, but there's nothing really exciting here. The graphics are a bit repetitive too – rather too many wigwam interiors, I thought■

FACTS BOX

A bit dull and disappointing. Not one to lift your scalp. A lot more could have been done with the plot

APACHE GOLD
Label: Incentive
Author: Peter Torrance
Price: £7.95
Memory: 48K/128K

Reviewer: Gary Rook

★★★☆☆

OPERATION STALLION

Wrightchoice Software is a new name to the adventure field, but the company's first game, **Operation Stallion**, will look familiar enough to the eseasoned adventurer. Why might that be, I hear massed SU readers cry? Simple – like so many adventures for the jolly old Spectrum these days, it was written using Gilsoft's indispensable trio of adventure generating utilities, **The Quill**, **Patch** and **Illustrator**.

Let's start with the plot. Britain is being flooded with heroin, origin unknown. A villainous Chinaman, Chow King Kwok, is suspected of having something to do with it. Unfortunately, his brother has diplomatic immunity, and CKK is operating from his house. Plus, there's a mole in the special investigation team who is tipping the baddie off to the police's every move. Someone has to get in to the house, find the evidence against CKK, identify the traitor, and terminate the drug-smuggling oriental, with extreme prejudice. Sounds like a job for (your name here), licensed to kill.

On to the game itself. The graphics facilities have been used well, especially with the first location, a very well detailed government type bureaucrat's office. Nice tough, putting 00-whatever-you-happen-to-be in a pinstriped suit – we tend to forget that dashing James Bond is just another civil servant too. There seems to be an awful lot of doors in the first part of the adventure, all done in different colours, but looking pretty similar none the less. Apart from that, there's not that much else that springs to mind, graphics-wise. They're good, but a bit repetitive. The character set is good, very pleasing to the eyes.

FACTS BOX

Not wonderful or absolutely dreadful though it seems a bit short on problems so far. Worth a look, but a bit pricey

OPERATION STALLION
Label: Wrightchoice Software
Price: £6.95
Memory: 48K/128K

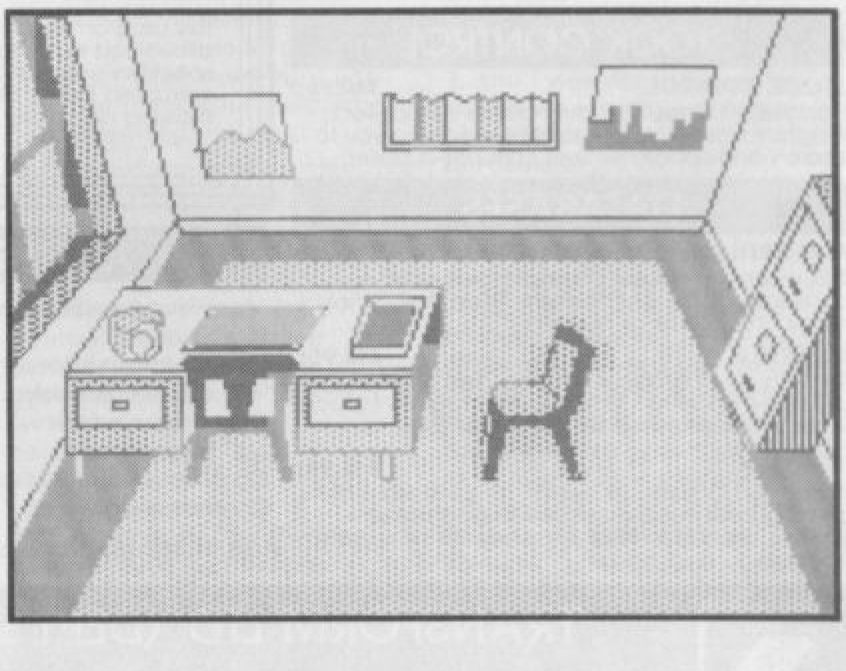
Reviewer: Gary Rook

★★☆☆☆

The parser is standard **Quill** and is actually very good. It understands 'get all', for example – a lot of games make you list every object you want to pick up separately.

As to the actual game, I can't tell you much more than that. I've finished the first part, but I can't get part two to load. It seems like part one is very short, with no real problems as such: the only thing that is likely to tax the brain is choosing what equipment to take with you. You get presented with an enormous catalogue with nearly 20 separate items. You only get to take a limited number. I'd guess that you aren't really going to know what to choose until you've played part two a few times.

There may be more to find in part one – there's a door you can open, but can't go through. Imagine how frustrating it's likely to be when you discover that you've missed something vital from the typing pool, and you have to go through the rigamarole of loading in part one again, playing through the whole thing a second time, saving your data, loading two, loading in your data from part one and so on and so on . . .■



SURGERY

Sinclair Surgery

Spectrum on the blink? Rupert Goodwins has a cure

Disc drives and genealogy

I have been using the KDOS system for sometime quite successfully in the parish using Masterfile and the wonderful **Last Word.** I'd like to upgrade to the 128K+2, but the Kempston disc I/F does not allow the 128K+2 to initialise. Kempston have told me that they have no plans to modify KDOS. Do you have any ideas?

On the genealogy front (see January SU), the following produce Spectrum programs **'Belgen'** by Beltech, Stanmore Industrial Estate, Bridgmouth, Shropshire. WV15 5HP (07462) 5420. **'Triplex'** by Datasearch, 10 Richmond Lands, Romsey, Hants SO5 8LA (0794) 513676

Rev Stephen Carter
Hellesdon
Norwich

● *Thanks for the info. It's usually true that if you want an off-beat program for the Spectrum someone somewhere has written it already!*

Your problem is a little more difficult to solve. KDOS will not work with the 128K+2. If you want to upgrade you'll have to buy a new disc system. The aptly-named Disciple might be appropriate – see the review in this issue. It will be compatable with both your existing software and whatever disc drive you're using. You'll have to copy all your files across though, as the Kempston format is different from the Disciple. If both a new computer and a new interface seems a bit much, then hold on. If enough people ask Kempston, they might well repent, and if enough people ask me I'll ask Kempston. You know my address. . .

Can't get a connection

I've got a Dixons Serial 8056 printer, and I'd like to use it with a 48K Spectrum and Interface 1. My local branch of Dixons tells me there is a lead, but can't seem to get hold of one. Could you tell me where to try?

Dave Small
Burbage
Wilts

● *Something I've found with Dixons and other chains is that they are often unaware of what other branches have. As the only source of the leads you want is Dixons, you could try other branches in your area. If that fails, then you will have to get a lead made up. You can either buy an 8056 QL/Spectrum +2 lead from Dixons, cut off the computer connector and fit a 9 way D-socket, or just remove the connector from the printer lead already fitted and replace it with a 9 way D-socket. This usually involves soldering, so you, like Edmund Berry, might like to entrust this to a local TV repair shop. You'll need to connect A04 on the printer side to pin 3 of the Interface 1, likewise A07 to pin 4, and B04 and B07 to pin 7. Soldering the plug on directly is to be preferred, as the square plug on the 8056 is notoriously prone to dodgy connections. Most people end up sellotaping it to the mating socket*

Multifacing with Opus

I bought a Multiface in November and, I have sent it back three times as I can't seem to use my Opus Discovery while the Multiface is connected.

I've cleaned all the contacts with a rubber (Romantic Robot's suggestion), but to no avail. even with the Multiface 1 off, which should make it invisible to everything, the Discovery just returns with disc I/0 error. Can you help?

P Kastner
Strood
Kent

● *A quick check with the Discovery's programmer (thanks Tarim) reveals that Multiface 1 and the Opus Discovery are designed to work together, but the Multiface **must** be plugged into the Spectrum first, and the Discovery plugged into the Multiface. If you do it the other way around, the things will fall out with each other something rotten. If, after doing that, things are still remiss then you probably have a Discovery with a subtle fault. It isn't unknown for faults in computers to leave normal working unaffected, only revealing themselves when a perfectly healthy peripheral is plugged in. If you get the chance, try the set up on a friend's Spectrum. If it works, then you've got a problem with your computer. If it doesn't, the problem is the Discovery*

Nasty noises with 128K+2

After getting fed up with the squidgy keys of the Spectrum 48K, I decided I should buy a 128K+2. When I got it home and plugged it in, there was an unpleasant humming noise coming through the sound all the time, no matter how well I tuned in the TV. The only way to make it bearable was to turn down the volume to such a low level that I could hardly hear the music!

Is my computer faulty, or is it the fault of the TV set?

Ramsay Clark
Achnamara
Argyll

● *It could be either, he said helpfully. I suspect the Spectrum, as I've heard (sic) of other people with the same problem. As you look quite a long way away from your local dealer, I'd suggest that you try and use an amplifier first. The sound output from thje 128K+2 (via the **Sound** socket) can be put through any audio amplifier. On some cassette*



*players you can plug the Spectrum into the **Mic** socket and hear the sounds through the cassette's loudspeaker. The buzz you're hearing is probably a result of the process used to generate the TV picture, and the signal at the **Sound** socket should be unaffected. If that doesn't work, then take back the Spectrum and make sure you hear the replacement working before leaving the shop*

Can Mouse meet Turbo?

Is it possible to connect a Ram Turbo Joystick Interface between an AMX Mouse Interface and my ZX Spectrum without damaging the hardware?

Karl Rowan
Harwell

● *It certainly is. The thing to watch out for is constant plugging and unplugging of peripherals; connectors and circuit boards for the Spectrum tend to be economically constructed and not suited for lots of insertions. With your selection of hardware there are no compatibility problems, and you can and should leave everything plugged in once and for all. Other people with addons that can't always be left added on should invest in an extension cable. This can be left plugged into the addon, and plugged in and out of the Spectrum. It's a lot cheaper to replace if it wears out*

Resolution resolved

My Spectrum manual says that the Spectrum has a resolution of 256x176 pixels, but the leaflet for the 128K+2 says that it has 256x192 pixels. I though the two were the same for the display, but have Amstrad made it higher resolution? Will that stop games working, or will they just not use the extra resolution?

Darren Colby
La Defence
Paris

● *You were right in the first place, the layout and specifications for the Spectrum 128K+2's display is identical to all previous Spectra (?) (apart from a second screen that machine-code software can use). The difference in the two figures is due to the bottom two lines of screen that the Basic only uses for error reporting and **Input** lines. You can't **Plot** or **Draw** there, so they're not included in the resolution figures in the manual. Machine code programs can and do use these two lines like any others, so the figure was changed for the 128K+2 leaflet*

Help with a hacksaw

At the moment I have a Saga 1 Emperor keyboard and a Spectrum 48K. I'd like to get the Spectrum 128K, not the 128K+2, and I was wondering if it would work with my keyboard

Mark Edwards
Portishead
Bristol

● *Yes and no (great answers this month). Electrically the Emperor will work with the 128K, but you'll have a few problems with the 128K's larger circuit board. And the various interfaces like the RS232 and the keypad will be awkwardly positioned, so you might have to perfom major surgery on the Emperor keyboard with a hacksaw. It depends on how bold you are and your expertise as a plastic surgeon. Me, I'd buy a 128K+2*

NEXT MONTH

All was darkness and darkness was all. Misery was everywhere and there was much nashing of teeth caused by unseasonal weather conditions. From our of the east came a band of adventurers clad in all manner of rainment, much of it by famous designers. A motley collection, they were led by good King David, brother of Martin Luther. King David was much liked for his politically sound views on the rights of maidens and people of other lands, he rode on foot, saying horseriding exploited horses. "Hold hard fellow adventurers" suggested King David "we must rest awhile for I have matters of import to bring to you."

And the adventurers did stop and commence to munching of all manner of burgers, fries and diet sunderies. King David did rise. "I have had a vision" and there was a muttering among the band who suspected much loopyness of their King.

"I have had instruction from the extremely mystic, all powerful Lord Telron of the grand council of Elvish Middlemanagement and Pixies" and there was much gasping at the name of the well known magician and amateur footballer.

"He commands us to prepare a Book of Light, a book of utmost power with which to banish the misery from these lands." and there was much enthusiasm for the idea and all thoughts of "Oh God not another one" were banished.

"And what should this book contain, oh leader" cried the multitude



SINCLAIR USER: THE QUEST CONTINUES

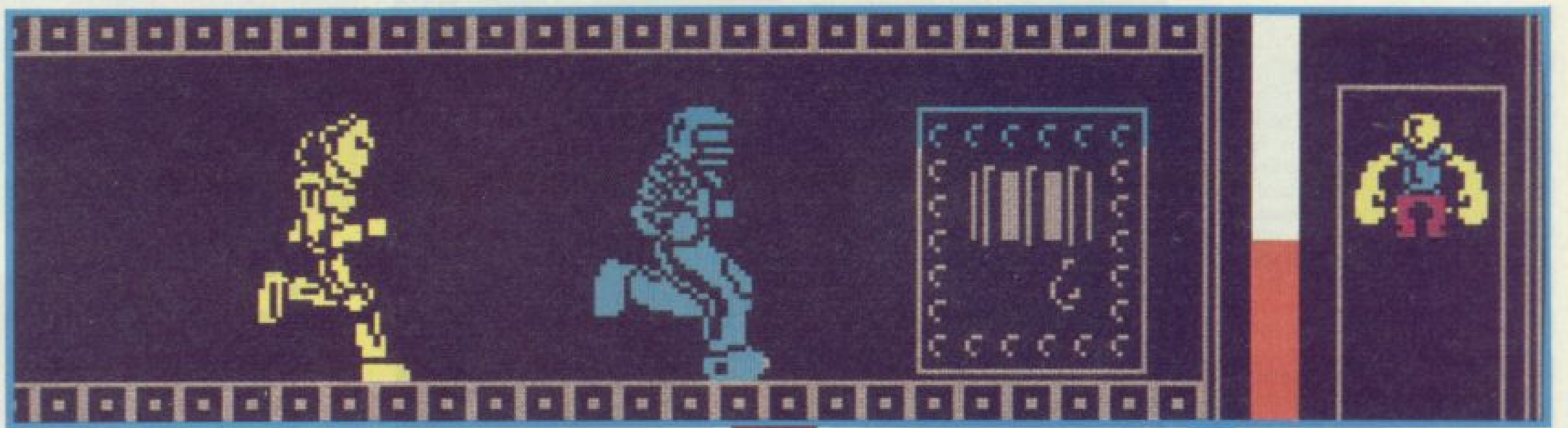
"Verily it must be fabby" said the right-on King "it should have astonishing revelations, perhaps the result of a Readers Poll"

"Aye, in truth an excellent plan" said the throng in Kings-Singers-style unison" and a free poster to pull out and keep" they added harmonically. "And a feature on Role playing games and a special feature reporting on the coin-op show wherein all the most stunning new, soon to be licenced arcade games are first shown."

"But my lord such a book, which would obviously contain more software reviews first, must surely have a goodly name"

"Aye and lord Telron has already revealed that to be it shall be known as Sinclair User April edition" and all agreed it was a goodly title likely to reduce misery levels pretty significantly and there was much merryment and partaking of bacon double cheeseburgers.

Sinclair User. The runic (5th Anniversary) edition out March 18th



ESCAPE!!!

Well I'll vote Conservative (bit of politics, bit of politics. . .) if Knucklebusters from Melbourne House doesn't look exactly the same as Judge Dredd.

Judge (!) for yourselves but what with the side-on view, the large graphics, the futuristic setting and the inordinate amount of violence, I reckon the phrase 'dead ringer' isn't too far off the mark.

It's set in a futuristic world where there are no prisons. The answer to crime here is to destroy the personality of the perpetrator, thus removing any dangerous inclinations and turning him into an easy-to-handle slave.

In the game, you are one such criminal. Robbed of your identity and stuffed into a metal suit, you decide that enough is enough and set out to change things. Standing on soap boxes and gesticulating isn't gonna change a whole lot, so you set explosive charges all around the city and initiate your escape plan.

Quite what your escape plan is is rather unclear. It seems to centre on running about the numerous platforms and levels and getting into all sorts of scuffles with security androids. There are six zones which you must fight through in order to reach the city perimeter and freedom. Each zone is inhabited by a different type of robot, each more efficiently programmed than the last.



Upon encountering one of these wretched androids, you set about him with fists and feet with a view to kicking him to bits. So much for jamming a piece of coat-hanger into the third electrode on the left.

Scattered among the litter of this future world (Bang goes the 'robots will solve all our problems in the future' idea) are many useful items. These can be used to open doors etc.

Melbourne House is pushing the 'devastating' music as a major part of the game. Hmm. The Commodore version has music by the ace tonester Rob Hubbard. Whether the 128K+2 version will use the same music isn't clear but on a 48K it's going to sound pretty weedy.

Streetdate: February.
Price: £8.95

ZUB'S SUCCESSOR

Amaurote comes from Mastertronic via Binary Design and looks completely fabulous. It's set in a futuristic city which is divided into 25 sectors. The city is part of rapid new development that has sprung to life after the discovery of a remarkable new concrete substitute.

It's cheap and safe with no adverse effects on humans. Insects, on the other hand, are another matter. They are strangely effected by radiation which was previously undiscovered in the concrete. It makes them bigger.

Pretty soon, the whole place is overrun by giant insects. It's up to you to guide a mechanical walker around the sectors, wiping them out.

You drive around the streets, lobbing bombs out of the top of your walker. The main snag with the bombs is that they bounce until they hit something, and will quite happily destroy buildings and trees.

The toughest task is to kill off the queen. There's one at the centre of each section, and they're extremely tough.

You begin with a budget of around £5,000,000 with which you can repair your walker if it gets damaged. Obviously, your controllers won't be too happy if you go over-budget.

Streetdate: March.
Price: £1.99



ALIENS CONFUSION

What's this? Aliens in Previews again? No. Not at all. Yes, I know that it's from Acrivision (very closely connected to Electric Dreams), and I know it says Aliens on the box and I know it's based on exactly the same idea but it's not the same game.

Aliens – The Second Part was produced in the States and approaches the movie in a slightly different manner.

Instead of creeping around the big underground complex of LV 426, this game is made up of lots and lots of different bits. You start off in a mothership from which you must take a Drop-Ship down on to the surface of the planet. Then you have to rescue your fellow marines from the alien beasties using the APC. Next comes the scene involving lots of blasting in the operations room before finding yourself in the maze of air-ducts, being pursued by the aliens. Penultimately comes the bit where you must rescue Newt from the Mother alien and finally comes the big finale where you slap the big insect around while wearing a metal exo-skeleton.

Sounds like a multi-load to me.

Accusations will obviously be levelled at Activision for trying to cash in on the same idea twice. It's story is that the game was already underway in the States when they found out about it. Actually, I'm inclined to believe them as it actually looks like a superior game, and not as if it has been cobbled together in a last minute rush. They are currently working on enhancing the graphics and other tweaking procedures.

Streetdate: to be announced.
Price: unconfirmed



COMPILED BY JIM DOUGLAS

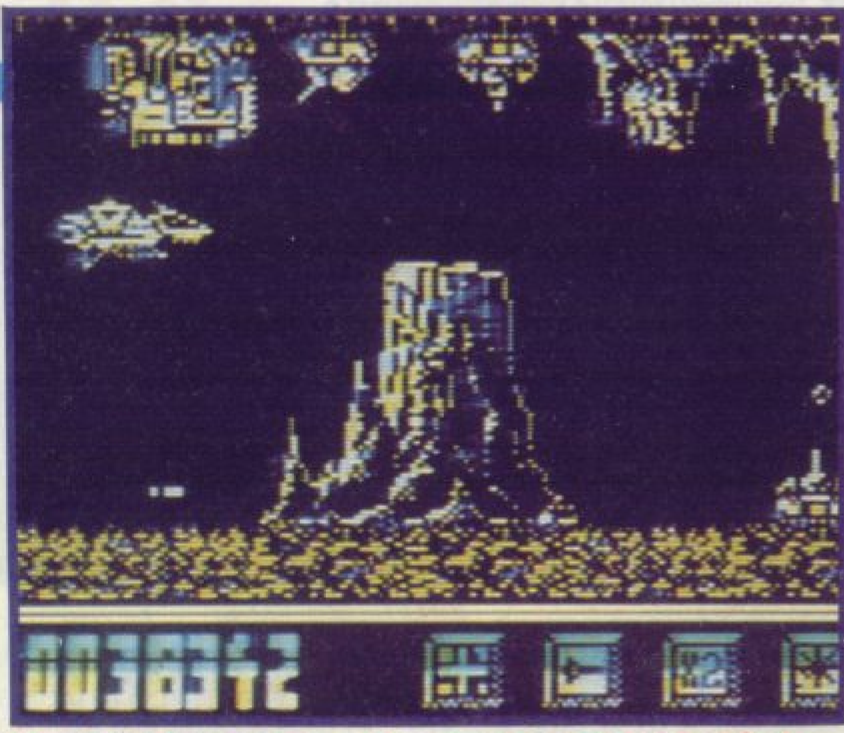
CODED MYSTERY

Codemasters is shaping up to give Mastertronic a run for their money in the value stakes.

Transmuter, priced at a barmy £1.99 is all about killing things. It's a scrolling shoot-em-up with 15 levels from the people who brought you the whizzaway BMX Simulator which was, interestingly enough, previewed last month on these pages.

We've got absolutely no other information at all except that each time you shoot an alien you can absorb some of the energy from the explosion or something. Hmm. Check out the pic anyway.

Streetdate: February.
Price: £1.99



MIAMI MURDER

Murder Off Miami originates from a book by Dennis Wheatley (Interesting Fact 1: Dominic Wheatley from Domark is the grandson of Dennis W.

Apparently the book has just been re-released and manages to coincide very nicely, thank you with a spin-off game from CRL. The book strays from Dennis' usual old occult novels and tries very hard to be a rather good who-dunnit.

The book comes with all kinds of extra bits and bobs such as fake police files, 'blood' and other clues to help you work out who committed a murder and then check it against the solution in the back of the book.

And the CRL game follows the same idea. It's being programmed by the ever-dapper group at Delta 4, who brought you Bored

WAVE THAT CRAZY BANANA?

Wave that crazy banana? Oh – it's not a banana at all. For a moment it looked as though Firebird had gone all surreal with its new game. Willow Pattern. Instead it's a hum-drum make-a-map style game involving the snoozy old plot that your granny insists on telling you while she's washing up her totally useless 'crockery'.

"You see this plate," she would gurgle, "Well, it tells the story of two young lovers, Chang and Koong Shee. Now, Chang used to visit Kong Shee until her terrible father decided Chang was a bad influence on his daughter. He ordered his guards to attack Chang and keep him away from Koony Shee. So the couple decided to escape together and row away in a boat that was moored on the other side of the grounds. And that is what the picture on this plate is all about. Now, get out of my kitchen you horrible little brat or I'll put you in the oven and have you for dinner."



What is this? Written by morons? Whatever, that's the excuse Firebird has come up with for releasing yet another semi-martial-arts program with a bit of exploration and a useless sub-game. The bananas mentioned earlier turn out to sort of sword things but they are rather enormous, and your decidedly weedy character waves it in a very non-aggressive manner.

Sounds like Firebird doesn't seem to realise the increasing standard of budget software.

Streetdate: February.
Price: £1.99

HOT SEAT

Oh *honestly.* Dark Sceptre hasn't even been released yet and Mike Singleton's latest game has been announced.

This time, Melbourne House will be launching it. (And therefore will carry the can when it sails past the release date *a la* Star Trek)

Throne of Fire is billed as 'superheated strategic combat' and Melbourne House says it is going to be very good indeed.

We've yet to see anything of the game-play and have only this pic and the usual ludicrously convoluted storyline/instructions to go by. So far things don't sound too promising.

Throne of Fire is the umpteenth game to – if we are to believe what we are told – push the Spectrum to its limits and involve revolutionary gameplay.

It centres around three princes, each power-mad and very unpleasant. The princes are sons of the King Atherik. After the King's untimely demise, each son claims that he is the rightful heir. Unable to come to a deci-



BREAKOUT Mk VIII

Here's the new thing from those ever-innovative lads at Ocean. It's an entirely new concept in computer gaming featuring an original storyline and wild gameplay. *(Now that's not strictly true, is it? – Ed).* Oh alright then. As reported in *News* last month, it's yet another coin-op conversion. This time it's a Konami game called Arcanoid which is heavily related to Breakout (pre-historic TV Console Pong derivation).

I don't quite know what the big umbrella has to do with anything, but I'm sure it will turn out to be a splendid game.

Streetdate: To be annnounced.
Price: Probably somewhere around £7.95, maybe

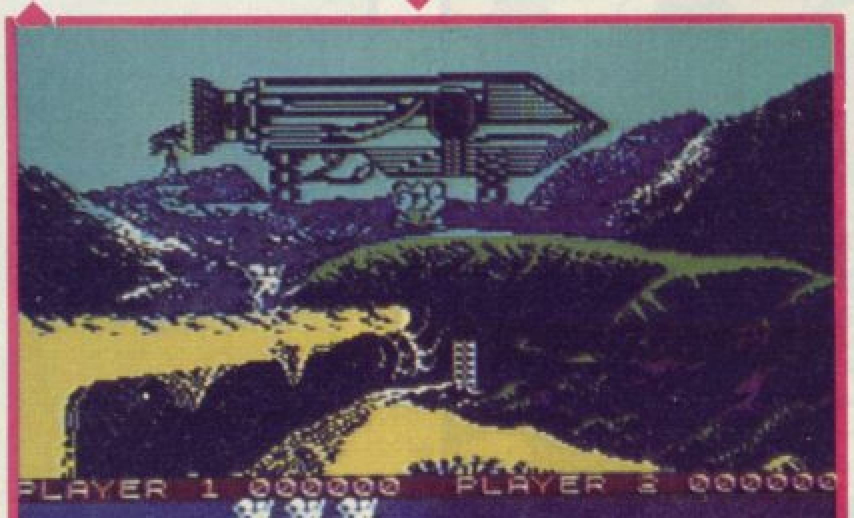
BUDGET BRAINACHE

Make of this what you will, but this is what Codemasters want you to know about its new game, Brain Ache.

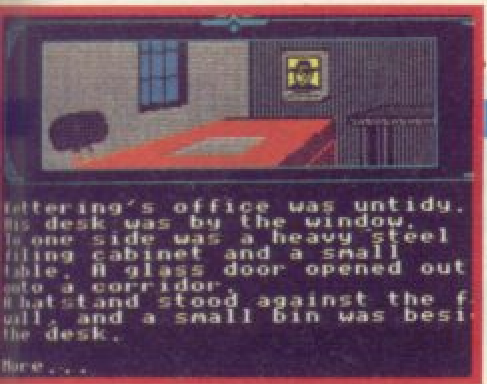
"The entire crew of Rotar 1, an interplanetary mining vessel, laughed loudly at private Harry Jones – Brainache – as they sent him back to the Stella mines to collect his forgotten equipment. Would they ever see their fat friend again?"

Streetdate: Unannounced.
Price: £1.99









of the Rings, Colour of Magic *et al*. Unlike the book, though, you don't get to fiddle around with all the interesting cardboard and plastic 'evidence'. (Swizz!). Instead the evidence is all there on-screen for you to find if you can.

It features some OK-ish graphics and bags and bags of text (as is Delta 4's wont).

All we've seen is a screen-shot, but I'm sure it will be topping.

Streetdate: February.
Price: £8.95

sion, they start killing each other.

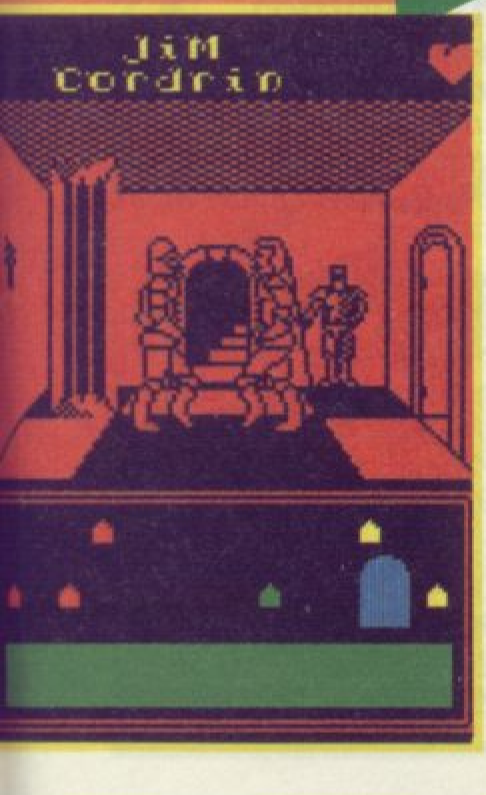
Like the sound of it any more now? Me neither.

The game can be played by one or two people. The computer will control however many princes are not being guided by the players. If you control one, it controls two. If you and a friend control one each, it plays one. You get the idea.

Apparently there are a lot of the usual magic objects which can be used in various ways. You can also call for assitance from some mercenary types from the surrounding area if necessary. Alliances can be formed by two princes against the other. Because it's from Mike it could be brilliant. Then again it might not appear till 1999. Bah! This sounds so dreadful that I refuse to waste any more space on it. (Suffice to say that it features some marginally impressive graphics and is intended to provide more scope for strategy gaming on the Spectrum.)

Right. That's quite enough of that.

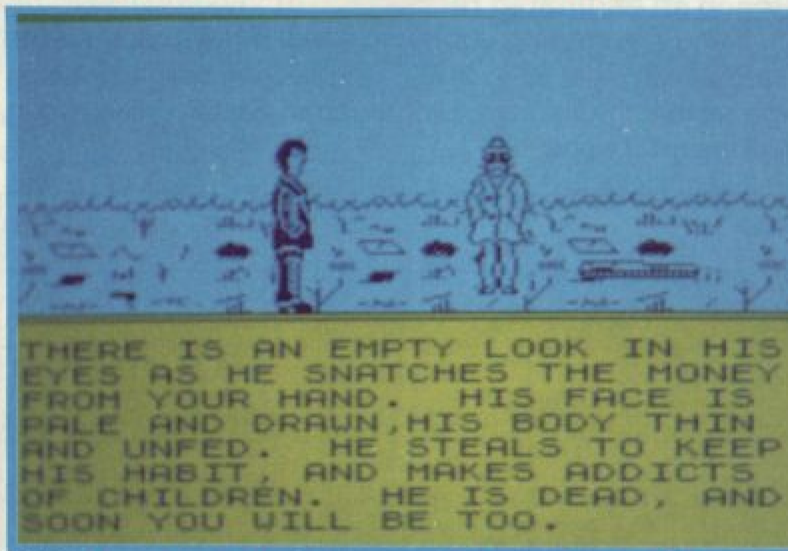
Streetdate: April (!!).
Price: £8.95

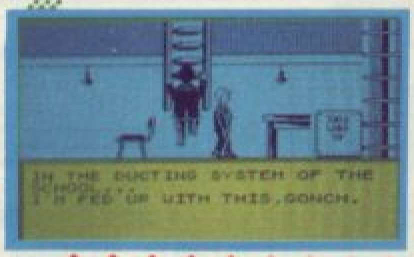


GRANGE HILL

Check out the picture. Read the text. Do you fancy the game? Grange Hill **from Quicksilva is a licence deal with a conscience, from a company with a conscience. It's about the kids, right? It's about being at school, living your life, taking the knocks of Thatcher's Britain. Every day facing the risks of drugs and death and all of that because your parents didn't make millions by buying shares in a company sold off to the public that was already theirs in the first place and can't afford to send you to the bastian of all-boys-together – the Private School.**

Sorry about that. Lapsed into a bit of left-wingery there. Anyway, Grange Hill **is all about the TV show of the same name. And because both the show and the game make various forays into the dangers of drug abuse, it's hard to regard the tie-in as an entirely cynical exercise.**





The main plot of the program is about two of the pupils, Gonch and Hollo who get up to all sorts of things that are not strictly above-board. This time, Gonch borrowed his mum's Walkman in order to join the in-crowd at school, because he can't afford one of his own because his mum isn't a company director or a member of the Royal Family *(pack it in – Ed)*. Anyway, his mum wants it back, right? I mean, what is she supposed to do in the house all day as she hasn't got a job because she doesn't want to work for useless money or be sexually harassed at work... *(Ssnnnnnip – Ed)*.

Well, everything would be OK had Gonch not got the Walkman confiscated. He and Hollo must try and get it back from wherever it was hidden by the teachers. All the time they are faced with problems. There are three girls who roam in a gang, there's the caretaker who patrols at night and there is the ever-present menace of drugs. The program looks to be along the same lines as many graphic-adventures, incorporating some text along the lower half of the screen as well as the graphics.

It's been designed by the Deux Ex Machina **author Colin Jones and includes hundreds of adventure style problems.**

Streetdate: Late February.
Price: £9.95

WHO CARES IF No 5 IS ALIVE?

The plot of Short Circuit **doesn't for some reason particularly appeal to me as a movie.**

See what you think of the storyline: (I reckon it's 95% ropey, but then *ET* didn't do a lot for me either). Number 5 is a robot. He's part of a team constructed by The Military for various nefarious activities. In a freak accident (this is where it goes horribly off-beam) Number 5 is zapped by something or other and – whammee! is endowed with human feelings.

Things go dreadfully wrong for Number 5 when everyone discovers its secret and decide that it has to be taken back to the lab and pulled to bits in order to discover what went wrong.

In Ocean's game of the film, you – in case you hadn't worked it out – are Number 5 (I'm not a number I'm a free will) and must avoid being caught by the various factions which would rather you were a pile of nuts and bolts on a workbench.

The game is in two parts – the first showing your attempted escape from the lab in quassi-3D style. The second is side-on and puts you outside the building on the run from the bad guys on your tail.

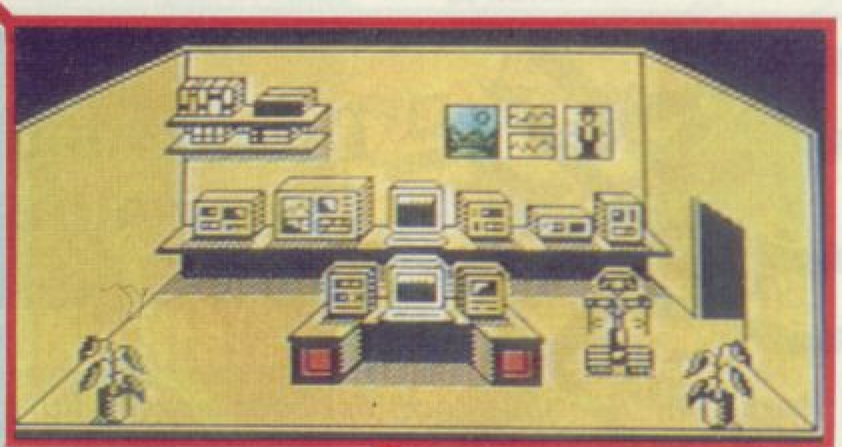
On the way, you'll have to work out how to operate the weapons and gadgets with which you're armed in order to assist your bid for freedom. Things aren't as easy as they sound. A fail-safe device was built into the robot, preventing it from being able to kill anything.

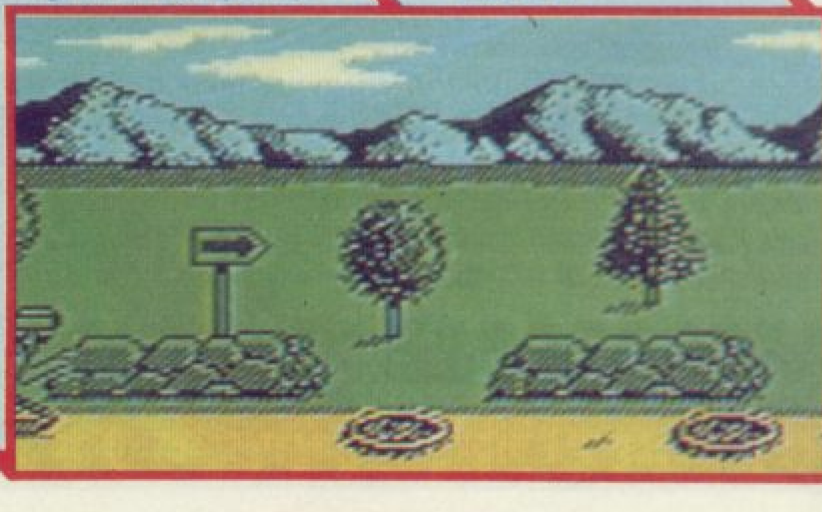
Apparently it was a 'box office hit' in the States and therefore is either horribly cutesy/absurdly violent/ridiculously hyped.

I go for the first option because a) it's not a very violent-sounding storyline and b) I'd never heard of it.

The shorts we've seen so far are more exciting than Ocean's last foray into the movie-game field – Top Gun, **which was a big turkey on all counts.**

Streetdate: late February (remember, this is an Ocean game.)
Price: £7.95





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Dear Goodly Merchant Tobacconist (Newsagent),

Ah, 'tis a fine morn, Spring is a-comin in, and much merryment is in the hearts of good English folk. Not only for reasons you already know; the sunshine glinting through the treetops, the skipping hares and the return of Surprise Surprise on the box (oh yey!). No. The oncoming season of Spring promises far, far better things.

The knowledgeable people of Fayrengdon and its surrounding counties are the happiest of all. Much taken with the idea of enjoying their time away from the dusty, learning establishments. These individuals are known to enjoy nothing more of an evening than the manly pursuit of combatting those skilled in the martial arts, or pitting their wits agains fiendish overlords in adventure games. Such pursuits are followed with their trusty Spectrum near at hand.

And why are the people described above looking forward with such anticipation to the middle-to-end period of each month? Around the 18th('Tis owing to the fact that the 18th is the day that Sinclair User is to emerge from its mysterious citadel in The City.

Being a well-informed personage, I understand the outrageous demand put upon men of your occupation to produce SU as if copies grew on trees. In order to save myself the unbearable disappointment of possibly missing a copy of the most lively, informative up-to-the-minute Spectrum magazine in the country please reserve a copy every month. My name and residence are shown below.

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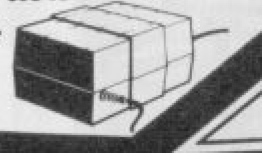
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PREVIEW



INDOOR SPORTS

As I'm not a big fan of sports simulations and even less keen on compilations, it was a tough task getting an unbiased 'angle' on Advance's new thing. Indoor Sports.

Anyway, having wrestled with my inner self for a good five minutes, I came to the conclusion that it doesn't actually look too bad, in fact, really.

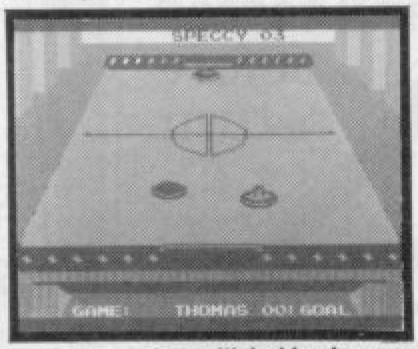
The crazee guys at ASPL (Advance Software Promotions Limited – snigger) have retained the programming people who produced Hardball on the Spectrum which was, if you recall, very good indeed.

Indoor Sports promises to include the following splendiferous features:

- One or two player option!
- Adjustable difficulty level!
- Oh, that's all there is. *(That's not many! – says the entire readership)*

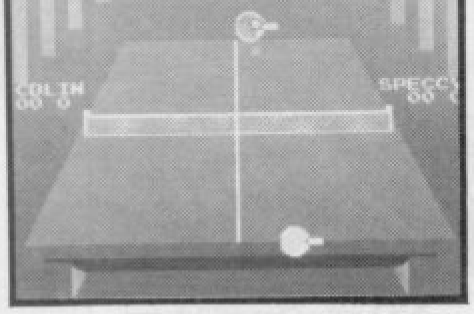
Anyway, here are four bits (or 'modules' as Advance, wholly unpretensiously, call them) which are:

- *Darts!* It's up to the Oki as your alter ego (in a perfectly lovely green T-shirt) tries desperately to keep his arm steady after the 38 pints of 'ale'. (Actually, this part looks quite good, as there are all sorts of things to take into account. Strength of shot, distance, wind chill-factor etc)
- *10 Pin Bowling* involves all the usual kinda things. You'll have to control how long your little man holds back his bowling ball (thus, for some obscure reason, determining the strength of the 'roll') and then guide the ball down the alley into the pins at the end.
- *Super Star Ping Pong* was originally released on the C64 from US Gold and was determined to be pretty OK-ish.
- *Air Hockey* (hem, hem) is apparently very popular in America – along with bad hamburgers and shooting taxi drivers – and therefore must be a good thing. It's a bit like shove-ha'penny (ask your Grandad) only involving a v.smooth board, and loads of little air-jets which make the penny equivalents glide around. In the arcades it's v/fast and v/ aggressive.



Add all of the above 'facts' together and what conclusion must we draw? It looks quite good. Curses

Streetdate: late February.
Price: £8.95



MONTY VIDEO

Monty Mole, underground hero of our time, is back. Still on the run, he decides the only way out is to buy his own island where extradition treaties exist only in his nightmares.

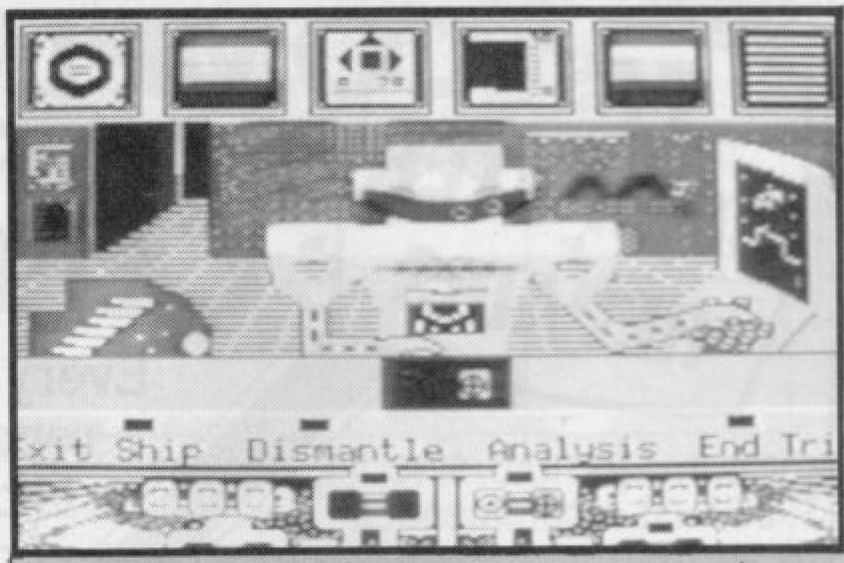
In Auf Wiedersehen Monty you get to bounce the Mole across Europe earning money from a variety of Eurowide but dodgy tasks. Europe is divided across more than 80 screens, mostly interlinked by the traditional bounding and trundling sprites. Sometimes, however, you have to take a plane.

As with all Monty Games the traditional platforms and ladders ideas are presented with a large dose of humour – mostly involving excrutiating visual puns like the leaning tower of Pizza (made of pizzas).

There are even references to Moldavia where, if you are particularly unlucky, you may meet Alexis Carrington...

The 128K version will come with funky soundtrack and digitised speech. The 48K version won't but both versions should also have a game editor that allows you to design your own screens. Sounds hopeful.

Streetdate: March.
Price: £7.99



★ FLYING FRACTALS ★

It's amazing what a bit of malths can do. Koronis Rift, along with Eidolon and Rescue on Fractalus caused a considerable stir a while back when they surfaced on another well-known-home-computer.

They were the first proper games to make use of the extraordinarily clever routines known as Fractals. They were invented by a cocky old Frenchman one day who decided that it would be a good idea if everything was made up of smaller versions of himself.

Years and years later George Lucas got bored with Star Wars and thought it would be a good idea to make some computer games. And so Lucasfilm was born. Being a bit of an academic himself, George told his programmers all about Fractals and that they were very good indeed. *(Are you sure about all of this? – Ed).* And so Koronis Rift was born.

Right. That's enough history. Rift is set deep in the swirly bits of space that not many people know about. You are a sort of fururistic junk-dealer and you fly around in a clapped out Scoutcraft looking for interesting bits and bobs to collect.

After hearing about some rich pickings on a distant planet named Koronis, you set off with a view to making a tidy sum on all the unclaimed goodies. Things are never as easy as they seem (don't you know) and there are lots of guardian characters on the planet who aren't keen on you running off with all of their gear.

That's the basic ideal: fly around he surface of the planet, collecting arms, shields and valuable goods while staying out of the way of the ever-present guardians.

That's just about it. It's a jazzed-up flight simulator of sorts with a few explorative elements and some rather impressive graphics too.

Streetdate: Late February.
Price: £9.99



The Last Ninja from the wholly, reputable System 3 Software follows the time-honoured storyline of a Bad Person, running off with something that belongs to some Good People. You, as a Good Person must go and get the object.

The only possible excuse for using such a phenomenally bad storyline as this is if the graphics and gameplay are very, very good. Since we've seen not-a-lot of the Spectrum version, it's hard to tell. Anyway, it's a sort of scrolly-diagonal punch-up in which you have to locate the house (I'm sure there is a very impressive oriental word for house, but am unable to recall it) and get the object back from him.

It's not sounding very good, is it? Well, don't go a-wandering off just at the moment. Not until I've told you about the other things in it anway.

There is, obviously, your energy level which can be replenished by eating things or collecting flowers or something. You've also got a variety of weapons. Upon being confronted by a mad brick-throwing Bad Person you must decide which weapon to clonk him with. Should you choose an iron bar, an iron bar with a point at the end or the old stand-by, the Shiruken? (Quick competition: How many times has Shiruken been used in this issue?

From this Commodore screenshot, we reckon that it looks rather good. Judge for yourself.

Streetdate: "Soon" (Pah!)
Price: £8.95



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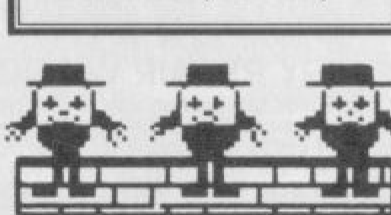
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Films and programs Gremlin would most like to see turned into computer games:

● **9½ Weeks** (System 3) – you play Mickey Rourke. You move Mickey around his designer flat collecting objects – ice cubes, chilli peppers, honey, and blindfold. If you collect all the objects within 9½ weeks Kim Bassinger comes out of your closet and starts wandering around the flat. You must throw objects at her.



Mickey Rourke goes for the Bonus

● **Hannah and her Sisters** (Mikro-Gen) – you play Woody Allen (a wacky sprite), move Woody around the New York intelligentsia. Make sure you keep control of Woody's 'neurotic rating' by regular visits to the shrink and by collecting the Valium scattered around. Win the game by finding a meaning to Woody's life.

● **Breakfast Time** (Mosaic) – a strategy game. You are controller of *Breakfast Time* and must try to win the ratings battle with *Good Morning Britain.* Hire and fire staff (sending them off to do kiddie's programs or fashion shows as a last resort), decide whether presenters should wear comfy pullovers and do items on skate-boarding ducks or dress in sober business suits and bore everyone to tears.

● **Secret Society** (Delta 4) – Hilarious adventure game romp through the Official Secrets Act. Located in the offices of BBC Scotland is the top secret information used to create a TV series. You are a well known govenment, can you collect the magic powers (the spech-al branch is po-lis, sec-shun two) necessary to stop the BBC from showing programs and pretend that it's nothing to do with you?

● **Come Dancing** (Ocean) – violence and mayhem as you, controlling Peggy Spencer's Latin American formation dance team, attempt to wipe out the nimble-footed competition. No place for the faint-hearted – use a variety of 'dirty tricks' to ensure your place in the final.

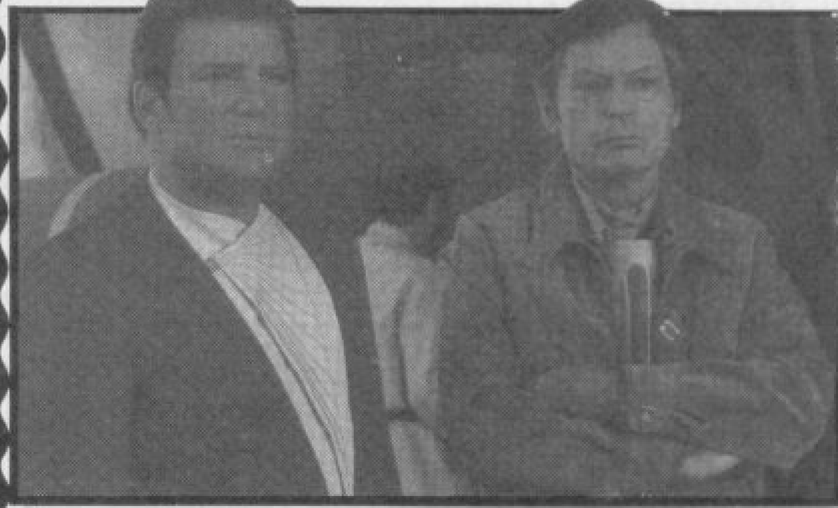
● **My Little Pony** (Mirrorsoft) – fast moving arcade game as you try to wipe out the entire family of 'bathroom fittings' coloured pony friends before the horrible theme tune drives you mad.

● **Care Bears** (Melbourne House) – the Care Bears have gone beserk. Having spent far too much time being sickeningly nice, psychosis has set in and the Care Bears are destroying the world. Can you get them to see an animal psychologist in time?

Finally, here are series of TV tie ins Gremlin rejected as being too ludicrous and preposterous to be included here: *Benny Hill, Eastenders, Adrian Mole, It's a Knockout, The Archers.*

GREMLINS TOP TEN NAFFEST PROMOTIONAL TOOLS:

● Little rubber bat on a string – Domark, Friday 13th
● Kiss me Quick hat with Mugsy written on it – Melbourne House, Mugsy
● Case including embossed glasses, wine and a video presentation – Atiolasoft, themselves
● Fluffy Piranha – Piranha, themselves
● Mug with frog on it – Hewson, can't remember
● Various Police items – Argus, Police game
● Useless mechanical hand – Beyond, Psytron
● 'Free' software with +2 – Amstrad, +2
● Spurious software 'club' – A lot of people
● Blood capsules that burst – Domark, Friday 13th



I knew we should have changed at Camden

Space ... the final frontier. These are the voyages of the computer game **Star Trek**, its five year mission – to boldly take longer than any other computer game licensing deal has taken before it. (Cue hairspray advert music.)

Now that the movie Star Trek IV (the one which according to the promotional adverts seems to be entirely set on a tube train) is almost with us Gremlin thought it was time to inaugurate 'Star Trek watch'.

Relax, this does not involve seeing Lieutenant Witherspoon turn into a slug monster again, nor do you have to watch women to whom James T. is attracted disappear into a sludge of soft focus for the nine hundredth time. No need either to hear Scotty say 'she canna take it capt'n,' Bones say 'I'm just an ole country doctor,' and Spock declare things to be illogical.

The idea of 'Star Trek watch' is this: every month Gremlin will look for any sign of the Spectrum version of the mega epic game that 'was being held back to release in time with the movie'. Gremlin will report on the latest developments. Beam me up Watson.

Charts are funny old things, aren't they? With merely a brief look at one, it is possible to make judgements about the state of a civilisation. And so, *Gremlin* ponders the trends in the gaming market, and comes up with the following list of programs that will be top next Christmas next year.

In reverse order, of course:

(5) **Startrek**	Rainbird
(4) **Dark Sceptre**	Beyond
(3) **49p Classics**	Elite
(2) **Journey to Milton Keynes**	Magnetic Scrolls
(1) **Frogger (the official version)**	Ocean

GREAT QUOTES THAT NEVER HAPPENED ---

"Look chaps we can't put a tape recorder as unreliable as that one in one of our products – it just isn't fair on the general public"
(Alan Sugar to +2 development team).

****

"Having thought about it some more I can't imagine what madness overcame me, it's going to be a gigantic flop and I'm pulling the plug on the project right now"
(Sir Clive Sinclair shortly before launch of C5).

****

"Your computer doesn't work! Call Amstrad! Call the salesman responsible! We're going to get this problem sorted out if it takes all night."
(Dixons to a humble punter).





Alan Sugar

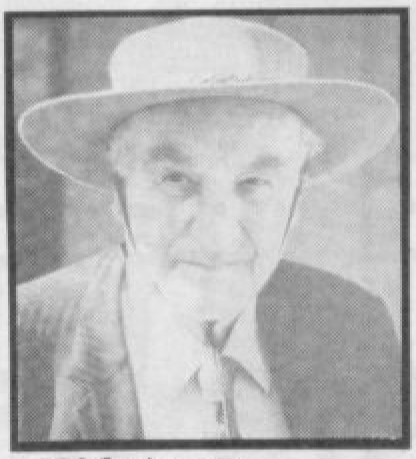
"God it's absolutely dire isn't it. How we could manage to make the one micro program on the BBC so absolutely irrelevant to 99% of the people who actually use computers in the home escapes me. The problem is that we are completely out of touch with the real world."
(Spokesman responsible for Micro Live.)

****

"Listen, the game is absolutely terrible but I'm supposed to promote it anyway. Would lunch help?"
(not a few PR people to journalists).

****

"After a couple of weeks you'll completely give up trying to learn to program the thing and you'll just be using it as games machine. The whole 'educational tool' thing is just a fraud perpetuated by computer manufacturers. The average home computer has almost no educational significance whatsoever"
(The shop salesman to earnest parents about to buy a computer.)



A BBC Spokesman

****

"Of course if the +3 is very successful and gets back-up software we will drop the +2 immediately"
(Amstrad to the world).

Gremlin



Mark Cale: Mr Personality

News reached Gremlin of peculiar activities at a recent party held by Activision. Charming debonair man-about-town, System 3 owner Mark Cale 'as bin a bit of a norty boy, Gawd bless 'im'. Cale very nearly brought the world **Twister Mother of Harlots** before he found out what a harlot meant and brilliantly changed the name of the game to **Twister Mother of Charlotte** (sister of Abigale and daughter of Victoria) and promoted it with a female dance team who may or may not have taken all, most of, or some of their clothes off at the PCW show a while back. On with the story . . .

At the Activision party young Mark managed to pour drink down the dress of C.H (a perfectly pleasant normal looking woman who much against her will gets voted 'cutie of the year' in tawdry awards ceremonies). The general opinion was that it was a deliberate act.

Seeking vengeance a production woman named Pam proceeded to smother Mark'sY-fronts in ice cubes to general applause. If only every sexist idiot could be so treated . . .

CAPTION COMPO NO 5

Last month's special novice caption competition drew some of the best entries yet seen in this or any other such competition. Lots of people had the little robot and the Spectrum being related in some way but Gremlin preferred those offerings that made use of the fact that the robot actually seemed to have a very dubious expression on its electronic visage. Runner up - so nearly a winner - was the simple but sublime "Does the tape recorder work?" – scepticism there from Andrew Campbell but the winner for its outraged tones of Aylesbury and implied comment on PR scams is this from Mr R.W. Miles of Broadstone, Dorset. "Sod the publicity you're not wiring me up to that". Great stuff, money will be trudging its way toward you.





What d'you get if you cross a Morris dancer and a short, thick plank with an ancient ZX-81? Another Gremlin Caption compo. There's £20.00 for the winner who comes up with the most original caption based on this charming scene of rustic bliss – taken in Milton Keynes.

Send your offering to Gremlin Caption Competition No 5, Sinclair User, Priory Court, 30/32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU. Entries must reach us by March 6th. Don't be late.

Name...

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Caption (max 12 words)..

....

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